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WICKLIFFE.

W R I T I N G S

OF THE

REVEREND AND LEARNED

JOHN WICKLIFF, D

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN OXFORD, AND RECTOR OF LUT
IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATOR OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

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LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF JOHN WICKLIFF, D.D.

THE state of England during the latter part of the fourteenth century presents many causes for painful reflection. Avarice and pride characterised the higher classes, while the lower were involved in misery, and vice abounded among all ranks. Contemporary historians ascribe much of this dissoluteness of morals to the civil wars of preceding reigns, whereby the country was desolated, and the bonds of society relaxed. The peace of the country, it is true, had become more settled, but many causes united to prevent moral improvement. The course of foreign victory inflated the national pride; the spoils that accrued to individuals from successful warfare, and the habits acquired thereby, promoted luxury and dissipation among the higher ranks, further stimulated by the introduction of new articles of expense through an increasing commerce.* At the same time, while, the people in general were exhausted by calls for supplies and personal aid to carry on foreign hostilities, the feuds and oppressions of powerful barons, with the plundering of bands of robbers for many years suffered with impunity, caused much misery among the lower classes, whose sufferings led to the insurrections in the early part of the reign of Richard II. Such in reality was the state of England in the days of Wickliff, as depicted by the annalists of that near his time, although general historians, engrossed by

* The ransom of the prisoners taken by sir Walter Mauclerc in his campaign, A. D. 1340, was equal to 100,000*l.* of our present money.

Walsingham states that, "A. D. 1348, such quantities of furs, silks, fine linen, jewels, gold and silver plate, rich furniture, &c. were brought into England, that every woman of rank obtained some of them, and were seen in every mansion. Then the ladies of England became proud and vain in their attire, and were as much elated by the acquisition of these things, as the knights of the time were by the acquisition of the sword."

details and political events, dwell but slightly upon the circumstances.*

Another cause tended much to produce and to perpetuate an unhappy state of society. For the soul to be without religion is not good, and those were days of ignorance and darkness. Some symptoms of a revival of learning appeared, yet little progress had been made in science. The universities and the schools retarded all advances in useful knowledge. Improvements in fine arts were made subservient to luxury rather than beneficial to the general character of the age. But as to spiritual truth was the greatest and most serious evil. The main object of those who called themselves ministers of religion was to enslave the minds and to plunder the property of the people committed to their charge; they kept from them the true meaning of the gospel, and sought to be revered as beings superior to their fellow-men, while they indulged every debasing passion. The corrupt and depraved state of the popedom at that time is admitted by every historian; it is described as literally "the seat of darkness upon earth." To the papal power every ecclesiastical prince was compelled to look for authority and direction to perform the duties of his charge, and we may easily imagine what

* One proof of the licentiousness of those days will be found in the year 1380, an expedition was fitted out to aid in the wars of Burgundy. English troops lay for some time near Portsmouth, waiting for provisions. They ill treated the country round about, carrying off men's wives and daughters. Among other things, they asked John Arundell, the commander, went to a nunnery, and asked if his troops might be allowed to visit there! This being refused, they entered by violence, and on their departure compelled the nuns to follow them. A storm came on, when these unhappy females were driven into the sea by the very persons who had forced them to enter. The greater part of the fleet was lost on the coast of Ireland; and a thousand of his men perished.—See Walsingham. In other parts will be found several other instances of the military licence then prevalent. Froissart relates that the French troops, previous to their invasion of England, were equally profligate in their conduct, and they outraged their own countrymen without mercy. Each "gentilhomme" was followed by a servant called "un pillard," a plunderer.

The state of the lower orders in England may be seen from a record in the annals of Dunstable abbey, A. D. 1283, where William Pike, "our slave by birth, and all his family," is sold for a matter of course. The price was a mark, or thirteen fourpence! The prices of food varied much, owing to frequent

State of England in the fourteenth century

general character of those to whom the popes and the lords delegated the exercise of that paramount authority assumed. Ignorance as to scriptural truth was considered by such priests as the best safeguard of their but though the church of Rome has maintained that it the mother of devotion, we know that such a source only blind superstitious feelings, strongly opposed to truth. The instruction given to the lower classes at that period to harden them in ignorance and vice: they committed spiritual concerns entirely to the priesthood, or if they refused to be silenced in this manner, it was diver practice of austerities and will-worship, equally destructive of soul. The few virtues of that age were not christianity they were founded on the romantic notions of chivalry glimmerings of light which only served to make the surrounding darkness more visible; at best they were deceptive, leading the pilgrim from the way to real peace.* Only a small number of persons had been preserved from the corruptions of the times but they, even in the darkest times, had exercised some influence upon Europe, though subjected to the most bitter persecutions. A few individuals also, who were distinguished for their powers, as Grosseteste and Bradwardine, had borne testimony in England against the usurpations and crimes of the papacy. Others had begun to perceive that the conduct of the papacy when examined by the rule of scripture, was altogether unchristian.

The circumstances already noticed should be kept in mind when we enter upon the history of Wickliff. The deplorable state of the land made it ripe for sufferings. In Israel when luxury and wickedness abounded, prophets were sent to warn the people of approaching judgments, and to point out the way of salvation; so in England, Wickliff and others were raised up to bear faithful testimony to the truth, and to denounce what must be the end of the practices which then prevailed.

* Froissart's Chronicles show this. The mixture of general courtesy with licentiousness and cruelty, depicted by the historian, will strike the reader very forcibly.

† The monkish annalists, who were the English historians of the times, fully justify the sketch here given of the state of England in the fourteenth century. The English reader who may not have access to those sources of information, will find many particulars in the works of Henry, Andrews, and Turner.

we recollect the state of England, and the crying called for exposure and reproof, we shall be satisfied it was not an ambitious, or a revolutionary spirit, as so scribed him, but rather a prophet, as Jeremiah, “and night for the slain of the daughter of his people the voice of the Lord, “ Shall I not visit for these thi

grooms were clothed in silks, with cloth of grain and sumptuous, ye may be sure, for their estates. And this was only used in the court in those days, but also other people in towns and countries, had their garments cut far otherwise than accustomed before his days, with embroideries, rich fur smiths’ work, and every day there was devisings of new fashions, great hinderance and decay of the commonwealth. Monks were preferred to bishoprics and other ecclesiastical livings, could teach nor preach, nor knew any thing of the scriptures, only to call for their tithes and dues; so that they were more in the name of bishops, being lewd and most vain persons, in bishop’s apparel. Furthermore, there reigned abundance of sin of lechery and fornication, with abominable adultery, the king, but most chiefly in the prelacy, whereby the whole such their evil example, was so infected, that the wrath of God provoked to vengeance for the sins of the prince and his people. receipts in the work, entitled “ The Forme of Cury,” printed of the table in which the court then indulged.

The depraved state of the popedom is described by almost as civil as well as ecclesiastical. One extract may be given from Petrarch, who cannot be objected to as an authority on this point, that time there was a schism in the papacy, which it might have would oblige the pretenders to the popedom to more than that they might not disgust their adherents. But the state of the court at Avignon, about A.D. 1350, is thus described by Petrarch. Rome was, if possible, more depraved. He says, the former had become “ a terrestrial hell, a residence of fiends and detestable of all that is most wicked and abominable. No piety, no reverence or fear of God, no faith or charity, that is holy, just, equitable, or humane.” He adds, “ I speak of truth, where not only the houses, palaces, courts, and the thrones of popes and cardinals, but the very edifices appear to teem with lies? A future state, heaven, hell, judgment, are openly turned into ridicule as childish fables. What have of late been treated with so much contempt and scorn? is not one left among them to be an object of derision and contumelious lineation Petrarch confirms by several facts. In another place he says, “ Whatever perfidy and treachery, whatever barbarity, whatever immodesty and unbridled lust you have ever h

A. D. 1324.]

His birth.

not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" impressed by such feelings could not be indifferent to office, nor should he be judged by estimates of what are the duties of a minister of the gospel at the present period. We may consider England at that period, as in many respects resembling Judah in the days of the son of Hilkiah. Wickliff was called from the priesthood of the land, to testify as a prophet before kings and rulers, and like them unavoidably implicated in the political events of the time. Though visitations were not sent upon England to the same extent as those inflicted upon Judah, yet the painful scenes in the civil wars of the succeeding century, show that the sword came upon the land, and that the people were punished for the fruit of their doings. National crimes will bring down national judgments. Warnings are sent previously by prophets, but when the voice of the Lord, speaking by faithful ministers, is disregarded, execution will assuredly follow. As was so in the period referred to. The wickedness and ungodliness of England in the fourteenth century were extreme, and certain consequences were plainly exhibited by the sufferings of his associates; many, there is good reason to believe, died for things which concerned their peace, but the nation at large persisted in evil courses, and persecuted to death the witnesses of the truth. The calamities which followed have been depicted in the pages of history; the particulars of the suffering are forgotten amidst details of martial enterprise. Let England not forget the innumerable mercies she has received! may the warnings of faithful ministers of the gospel again be despised! and may our national sins never again reach such a height as to bring national judgments upon our country.

JOHN WICKLIFF* was born about the year 1324, at Wymondley, of the same name, a few miles from the town of Rye, in Yorkshire, where his ancestors had resided from the time of the Conquest. The family were respectable, and possessed considerable property, but continued the advocates of the

respecting the life and manners of the clergy, are sufficient and credible evidence. Many of these may be found in the third volume of Wilkins's Concilia. They seem wholly to have failed in effecting moral improvement, which is not surprising when we consider the sources from which they emanated. The gross doctrinal errors propagated by the church of Rome, even after the days of Wick-

stitutions which their relative earnestly laboured to remove. It is probable, that in consequence of the change in his views, he became estranged from his own family. Under feelings of this kind, he would be led to use the language of one of his tracts, speaking of the errors into which worldly minded persons fall, he says, “ With much travail and cost they get great goods and estates, and benefices for their children, and offer themselves to greater damnation; but they incline not to get for themselves the goods of grace and virtuous life. Nor will they suffer to retain these goods, as they are freely proffered to them, but hinder it as much as they may; saying, if a child will give himself to meekness and poverty, and flee covetousness from a dread of sin, and to please God,—that he shall become a man, never cost them a penny, and they shall prosper because he liveth well, and will teach other men the way to save their souls! For by so doing, the child gets many enemies to his elders, and they say that he slandereth his noble kindred who were ever held to be true men and faithful.”* In those days, next to the danger and reproach of being a heretic, and nearly as great, was the being accounted the enemy or relative of one suspected of heresy.

All the memorial which remains of the history of his youth is, that his parents designed their son for the church. His mind was early directed to the requisite studies. He entered at Queen’s college, Oxford, an institution then newly founded, from whence he soon removed to Merton college, the most distinguished in the university at that period. The number of scholars had recently been estimated to be about thirty thousand. Wickliff’s attention appears rather to have been directed to the studies suitable for his profession, than to general literature. As Fuller observes, “ The fruitful soil of his natural abilities he industriously improved by acquired learning. He was not only skilled in the fashionable arts of that age, but in the most abstruse, crabbed divinity, all whose fruit is thorns, but was also well versed in the scriptures, a rare accomplishment

* MS. On Wedded Men, their Wives and Children.—See also *Sermons and Opinions of John de Wycliffe*, illustrated principally from unpublished manuscripts, by Robert Vaughan,” Vol. I. p. 223; and it supplies a more complete personal history of the reformer than any writings than any which preceded it. By the author’s permission, a considerable use of his valuable selections has been made in the present brief sketch. The life of Wiclif by Lewis is very valuable and deservedly esteemed for the patient industry of the writer.

A. D. 1350.]

His early studies.

days." Dr. James enumerates various writers, by whom he considers Wickliff to have been grounded in the truth. He learned much from the fathers, and was considered indebted to Grosseteste and Bradwardine; but his writings show that his religious principles were mainly derived from the scriptures.

His perusal of the scriptures and the fathers rendered him dissatisfied with the scholastic divinity of that age, and his knowledge of canon and civil law then requisite for a lawyer enabled him to discern many of the errors of popery. His writings also show him to have been well acquainted with the history of his own country. The four fathers of the Latin church, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory, are continually referred to by him, so as to show his intimate acquaintance with their writings. Augustine, in particular, he seems to have valued more than the other scriptures. It will not be forgotten that Luther derived much instruction from the writings of that father. The acknowledged ability of Wickliff as a scholar, led his adversaries to suspect him of evil designs rather than of ignorance, while his friends gave him the title of the **Evangelic Doctor**. Even Knighton considered him second to none in philosophy.

Wickliff's mind must have received deep impressions from the awful visitation of Providence which occurred in the middle of the fourteenth century. Europe was shaken by a succession of earthquakes; shortly after, it was ravaged by a pestilence, the effects of which were more rapid and extensive than at this day we can easily conceive. More than half the people of this island were swept away; the alarmed survivors reckoned the mortality far higher.† That Wickliff was deeply impressed by this awful event, appears by his frequent references thereto in his writings, as if he is sounding an alarm to a careless and profane generation. In his first publication, a small treatise, entitled "The Law and the Church," in which he describes the corruptions which had pervaded the whole ecclesiastical state, as the main cause of the chastisement which Europe had so lately felt. Early impressions of this nature, evidently tended much to strengthen and to prepare the reformer for the arduous course he was called to pursue. That his mind had been led to look to the true ground of support is evident from a passage in his writings wherein he speaks of Christ Jesus as having "entered into the world, that is into holy church, by holy living and holy

* See The History of the Church of Christ, Vol. III., for a full account of Grosseteste and Bradwardine.

and with his blood he delivered man's nature; as writeth in his ninth chapter, Thou verily, with the blindness, or of thy testament, hast led out from the pit were bound. So, when we were sinful, and the children God's Son came out of heaven, and praying his Father for his enemies, he died for us. Then, much rather shall we now we are made righteous through his blood."

Thus we find Wickliff in his thirty-second year, re his scholastic acquirements, deeply impressed with the of divine truth, awakened to a sense of the divine enabled already to break through the bands of superstition in possession of that hope which alone can afford refuge to the guilty sinner. We shall now see how these preparations led him for the contest, and led him to the encounter in which he was called to engage.

The first circumstance which summoned Wickliff into conflict was a controversy with the mendicant friars. So they had settled at Oxford in 1221, where they attracted numbers by their professed freedom from the avarice of the other fraternities in general, and by their activity as preachers. They introduced many of the opinions afterwards adopted by the reformers, for a time saying much in opposition to the papal authority, and in support of the authority of the bible. But errors and encroaching spirit soon appeared, so that the bishop of Lincoln, who for some years had favoured them, at length deeply censured their conduct. Their zeal led them to exhort youths at the universities to their orders, called for opposition from Fitzraf, archbishop of Armagh, who, in 1357, affirmed that the students of Oxford were reduced on this account to six thousand, not more than their former number.* In 1366, a parliamentary ordinance ordered that none of the orders should receive any new recruits under the age of eighteen; also that no bull should be procured in favour of friars against the universities. Similar disputes took place in the university of Paris. The objections alleged against the mendicants, as stated by Wickliff, may be thus summed up: they represented a life inertly contemplative, as preferred to that spent in active attention to christian duties; they were deficient in morals when discharging their office of confession; when itinerating in the offices they assumed, they persecuted the innocent as they detected really "travelling to sow God's word."

A. D. 1360.] *His controversy with the mendicant friars*

and vice which has been charged on the corrupt clergy. Nor did Wickliff merely expose and seek to correct the error; he showed that they proceeded from the unchristian nature of the institutions, which evidently were opposed to the precepts of the bible, which they professed to regard.

Against these mendicants, Wickliff wrote several treatises, titled, *Of the property of Christ, Against able Beggars, and Idleness in Beggary.** The vices of the friars led him to expose more fully the vices of the Romish priesthood.

The approval which the conduct of Wickliff, in opposition to the mendicants, received from the university, appears from his being chosen warden of Baliol college in 1361. In the same year he was presented by his college to the living of Fillingham in Lincolnshire, which he afterwards exchanged for Ludger in Wiltshire. In 1365 he was appointed warden of Canterbury by Simon de Islip, the founder, then primate of England.

In the instrument appointing Wickliff to this office, Islip recommended him to be a person on whose fidelity, circumspection, and discretion he confided, one on whom he had fixed for that place on account of the honesty of his life, his laudable conversation, and knowledge of letters. Islip dying shortly after, Wickliff was displaced by Langham, his successor, who had been a monk, from whom on his promotion he appealed to the pope.

The integrity and courage of Wickliff are manifest from the boldness with which he continued to oppose the mendicants personally and by his writings, during the time his appointment was under consideration.

Another circumstance assisted to call Wickliff into public notice. This was the decision of the English parliament in 1366 to resist the claim of pope Urban V., who attempted the redemption of an annual payment of a thousand marks,† as a tribute for feudal acknowledgment, that the kingdoms of England and France were held at the pleasure of the popes. His claim was founded upon the surrender of the crown by king John to pope Innocent III. The payment had been discontinued for several years, and the recent victories of Cressy and Poictievre and their results, had so far strengthened the power of England that the demand by the pontiff, of the arrears, with the continuance of the tribute, upon pain of the papal censure, were unanimously rejected by the king and parliament. The reader must remember that this was not a question bearing only upon the im-

pope necessarily tended to abridge the general influence of the clergy. A measure of this description was almost unknown in the history of Europe at that day. Such claims were not relinquished by the papacy, and shortly after this decision of the parliament, a monk wrote in defence of the papal usages, asserting that the sovereignty of England was forfeited by the pope holding the tribute, and that the clergy, whether as individuals or as a general body, were exempted from all jurisdiction of civil power, a claim which had already excited considerable discussions in the preceding reigns. Wickliff was personally challenged upon by this writer to prove, if he were able, the fallacy of these opinions; nor should it be forgotten that this work did not proceed from any of the mendicant orders, but from one of the monks who were directly opposed to them. Thus it is evident that Wickliff's former conduct was rightly estimated to be that of a man not from one who merely opposed the mendicants, as was charged, but from one who would oppose the leading errors of the papacy at Rome, under whatever guise they might appear.

In Wickliff's reply, wherein he has preserved the substance of the monk's reply, he styles himself one of the royal chaplains, and combats the assumptions of the church of Rome, contrary to the sentiments by giving the substance of several speeches made by certain of the lay nobility in the recent debate relative to the claims of the pontiff. We need not enter into the details of this tract further than to quote the following declaration made by one of the speakers, that, "Christ is the supreme head of the church, the pope is a man, and liable to mortal sin, and who is guilty of mortal sin, according to divines, is unfitted for dominion over the church to the extent to which such a principle might be applied, from the well-known wicked lives of the pontiffs, which is contrary to the monstrous assertion of Romish divines, that the pope, though guilty of the most heinous sins, still was to be obeyed and respected in his mandates; even those which were contrary to religion!*

The treatise concludes with a view of the future of the church, according to Wickliff, which has long since been fulfilled. "If I may believe, the day will come in which all exactions shall cease, and the pope will prove such a condition to be reasonable and just. Who now in England ventures to assert that the temp-

* Bellarmine goes further he says: "Though the pope should be enjoining vices, and prohibiting virtues, yet would the church be bound to obey him, as long as he is in the papal chair."

A. D. 1366.] *Resistance to the papal claims.*

riety of the pope is supreme? or that his ecclesiastics are exempt from the laws of God and their country? yet such doctrines were openly maintained in those ages, and still are asserted in many parts of Europe! The parliament in 1366 also directed regulations to be observed, by which the power and influence of mendicants were limited. In the part taken by the university of Oxford, during these proceedings, Wickliff doubtless was concerned, and the attention given to his arguments on the subjects, which then so deeply agitated the public mind, must have brought his opinions concerning the scriptures, and other matters more immediately connected with divine truths, into general notice. Thus attention was called to those doctrines which he began publicly to advocate. One circumstance which produced this opposition to the papal claims, was the national animosity then existing between England and France. Many of the French being natives of France, evinced their partiality for their country, in which they then resided, on all occasions. All these concurring circumstances led Edward III. to pursue a course of conduct, which certainly characterises him as a promoter of reformation, at least as to its outward concerns.

John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, claims notice as conspicuous among the court and family of the British monarch, for the maintenance and support he afforded to Wickliff. Under his influence an attempt appears to have been made in 1371, by authority of parliament, to exclude ecclesiastics from all offices of state. Wickliff, in his writings, has so fully shown his deep sense of the necessity for the clergy being exclusively devoted to the duties of their spiritual functions, that we cannot doubt of his intimate connexion with the prince from whom such a proposition originated. The views of Wickliff as to the proper manner of discharging the office of minister to the church, will be seen by the following extract from one of his early pieces, entitled "The short rule of life." He says, "If thou art a priest, and becomest a curate, live thou a holy life. Pass other men in holiness, in holy desire, and holy speaking; in counselling and teaching the truth. Ever keep the commandments of God, and let his praises and his praises be ever in thy mouth. Ever despise sin, that may be drawn therefrom, and that thy deeds may be so faithful, that no man shall blame them with reason. Let thy life be thus a true book, in which the soldier and the peasant may learn how to serve God, and keep his commandments."

frugal life on poor men's alms and goods. Have bread to drink, and clothing, but the remnant give truly to those who have freely wrought, but who now may not be able to do so, from feebleness and sickness; and thus shalt thou be a true friend to God and to man." These are sentiments which were common in the early ages of the church, and Wickliff was not the only one to set forth precepts for others, which he did not practice himself. Similar passages will be found in the following pages. He was less earnest to enforce due respect for the ministers of the church, as will appear from the following extract. "Thy superior is thy spiritual father, who has special care of thy soul, and thou shalt worship (reverence) him. Thou shalt love him specially before other men, and obey his teaching as far as thou canst, according to God's will. And help according to thy power, that he may have reasonable sustenance when he doeth well his office. If he fail in his office, by giving evil example, and in teaching God's law, thou art bound to have great sorrow, and to tell meekly and charitably his default betwixt thee and him alone."*

In 1370, the papal court decided against the condemnation of Wickliff in the wardenship of Canterbury-hall. It was decreed that the inmates should all be monks, notwithstanding the express declarations of the founder, and the terms of the license to the contrary. The royal sanction to this sentence was not obtained two years afterwards. Among the means employed by his opponents, bribery appears to have been the most common. Wickliff was neither surprised nor troubled by this discovery. He does not refer to it in any part of his writings, nor was his reputation cast upon him thereby.

In 1373, Wickliff was admitted to the degree of doctor of divinity. As this rank was at that time unfrequent, and conferred a considerable degree of influence, it must have facilitated the diffusion of the doctrines he advocated throughout the country. Many of his scholastic pieces doubtless were lectures delivered by him as professor of divinity, to which office he was appointed in 1372. His early English writings also show both his doctrinal views, and the religious feelings with which he entered upon his new office. He was skilful in the use of the art of disputation then in vogue, and by accustoming his hearers to logical and metaphysical distinctions, he taught them to direct their minds upon inquiries, which he gradually directed

A. D. 1373.] *His lectures as Professor of Divinity.*

now in the Cotton library, may be included.* As that differs from the one in the present volume, a brief of two may be given. Urging that love to God be kept keeping his commands, Wickliff says, "Have a remembrance of the goodness of God, how he made thee in his own likeness how Jesus Christ, both God and man, died so painfully upon the cross, to buy man's soul out of hell, even with his heart's blood, and to bring it to the bliss of heaven." He admonishes that the sabbath not only commemorates the creation, but also the resurrection of Christ, and the gift of the Spirit, adding, "Bethink thee heartily of the wonderful works of God, who was so high and so worshipful in heaven, should come down so low and be born of the maiden, and become our brother, to buy us again by his hard passion, from bondage to Satan." After describing the sufferings of Christ, he adds, "All this he did and suffered of his own kindness, for any sin of himself, that he might deliver us from sin and bring us to everlasting bliss. Thou shouldest always remember constantly, how, when he had made thee of nought, thou hast forsaken him, and all his kindness, through sin, and hadst turned thee to Satan and his service, world without end, had not God and man, suffered this hard death to save us. Always see the great kindness, and all other goodness, which God has shown for thee, and thereby learn thy own great unkindness and thus thou shalt see that man is the most fallen of creatures and the unkindest of all creatures that ever God made! It should be full, sweet, and delightful to us to think thus on the goodness and kindness, and this great love of Jesus Christ!" Vaughan serves of this exposition, "We find Wycliffe zealously inculcating the lessons of inspiration, on the fall of man and the consequent depravity of human nature; on the excellence and pre-eminence of the obligation of the moral law; on the exclusive dependence of every child of Adam on the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness of his sins; and for victory over temptation, and the attainment of holiness, on the aids of divine grace. It appears that these momentous tenets were very far from being regarded by Wycliffe with the coldness of mere speculation."

The aid which the labours of Wickliff received from the public opinion then existing between the popes and the English government, has been already noticed; these differences were renewed in 1373, and continued until 1384.

In the year 1360, during the pestilence, seven Englishrics had become vacant, all of which were filled by alien papal provisions, and the result of inquiry in 1376, showed a very large number of the English benefices were in the hands of foreigners. An embassy was despatched to the continent to remonstrate with the papal see on this subject; Wickliff was one of the delegates. Bruges was the place appointed for meeting the commissioners of the papal see: the proceedings in all matters of a similar nature, were protracted by every art of evasion; they continued nearly two years, while the concessions obtained were few and unsatisfactory. Wickliff said during his visit to the continent, to satisfy him fully of the christian character of the papacy. He returned from the continent like Cranmer and Luther from Rome, more than ever convinced of the necessity of a thorough reformation in ecclesiastical government. He now styled the pope, “antichrist, the proud, world-loving pope of Rome, the most cursed of clippers and purse kerver.” He found strong expressions in his subsequent writings, but they all refer to the corruptions of the church of Rome, and to the damage and torment Wickliff received from the Romish ecclesiastics, it may be said, “Was there not a cause?”

The public attention was now awakened to the immoderate exactions of the popedom. A parliamentary remonstrance in 1376 states, that the taxes paid to the pope yearly out of the land, were five times the amount paid to the king; also that the richest prince in Christendom had not the fourth part of the revenue come received by the pope out of England. These circumstances might well call forth the emphatic expression contained in the same document, “that God had committed his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and not to be shorn or shaven.”

In November 1375, Wickliff was presented by the king to a prebend in the collegiate church of Westbury, and shortly after to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, at the request of the royal gift by the minority of lord de Ferrars, the pope was speedily called to take a still more prominent part in English affairs.

At that period a severe political struggle existed between the duke of Lancaster and the leading ecclesiastics, among whom were Courtney, bishop of London, and Wykeham of Winchester, the most distinguished. The particulars need not be detailed, it is sufficient to say that the transactions were of a complicated

A. D 1377.] *His appearance before the Prelates.*

find them adverting to the doctrines of Wickliff, as calling for official interference. This doubtless was intended as a check both upon the doctrines of the reformer, and the power of his patron.

In the convocation which met in February 1377,* Wickliff was cited to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, to answer certain charges brought against him for holding and publishing erroneous and heretical doctrines. A day was appointed for hearing his defence; the scene which ensued is thus described by Fox from the chronicle of St. Albans.

“ When the day assigned to the said Wickliff to appear came, which day was Thursday, the 19th of February, Wickliff went, accompanied with the duke of Lancaster, four friars appointed by the duke, the better to ensure Wickliff's safety, and lord Henry Percy, lord marshal of England. Percy going before to make room and way where Wickliff should come.

“ Thus Wickliff, through the providence of God, being safely and discreetly guarded, was coming to the place where the bishops were. By the way they animated and exhorted him not to shrink a whit at the company of the bishops there present. The bishops were all unlearned, said they, in respect of him—for so are the words of my author, whom I follow in this narration; should he dread the concourse of the people, whom the bishops themselves assist and defend, in such sort that he should be harmed. With these words, and with the assistance of the duke, Wickliff, encouraged in heart, approached the church of St. Paul, where a main press of people was gathered to hear what should be said and done. Such was the throng of the multitude that the lords, for all the puissance of the high marshal, with great difficulty, could get way through. In some time Courtney, bishop of London, seeing the stir which the lord marshal kept in the church among the people, speaking to lord Henry Percy, said, That if he had known before what mastery he would have kept in the church, he would have stopped him from coming there. At which words of the bishop the duke, daunting not a little, answered the bishop again, That he would keep such mastery there, though he said, Nay.

“ At last, after much wrangling, they pierced through the multitude and came to our lady's chapel, where the dukes and barons

was cited there to appear to answer before his ordination sit down during the time of his answer, but he shoo. Upon these words a fire began to heat and kindle between them. Insomuch that they began so to rate and revile one another that the whole multitude, therewith disquieted, began to stir on a hurry.

“Then the duke, taking the lord Percy’s part, with his words began also to take up the bishop. To whom the duke again, nothing inferior in reproachful checks and reprimand render and requite, not only to him as good as he brought, but also did so far excel him in this railing art of scolding that he used the words of mine author, the duke blushed and was angry because he could not overpass the bishop in brawling and railing. He therefore fell to plain threatening, menacing that that he would bring down the pride not only of him, but of all the prelacy of England. Speaking moreover unto him the duke said he, bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents, which he should be able to help thee; they shall have enough to do to help themselves. His parents were the earl and countess of Devon. To whom the bishop again answered, that to be bold to trust in his confidence was not in his parents, nor in any man but only in God in whom he trusted. Then the duke softly saying in the ear of him next by him, said, that he would pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, if he would take this at his hand. This was not spoken secretly but that the Londoners overheard him. Whereupon, the Londoners in rage, they cried out, saying, that they would not suffer the bishop so contemptuously to be abused, but rather they would lose their lives, than that he should be so drawn out by the duke. Thus the council being broken with scolding and bragging that day, was dissolved before nine of the clock.”

Some proceedings having been taken by the duke and the lord Percy, which affected the liberties of the citizens, a tumult was raised on the day following. Information was brought to the king at the Savoy, of the approach of the infuriated Londoners. The duke “being then at his oysters, without any further delay, he rose up and also breaking both his shins at a fall for haste,” he fled with the lord Percy, and by water went to Richmond, where the princess regent was, with Richard, the young king. In consequence of the interference the Londoners were compelled to humble themselves, and to make a great taper of wax with the duke’s arms.

. D. 1377.]

Papal bulls against him.

discussed whether it would not be lawful for the king in case of necessity, and as a means of its defence, to demand the treasure, that it be not conveyed to foreign nations, that the pope himself should demand the same under pain of his excommunication, and by virtue of obedience said to be due to him. An answer to this question would not now be considered any matter of great difficulty, but at that time it was a perplexing subject. It involved most important questions, both of a civil and religious nature. Under this dilemma the opinion of Wickliff was requested. In his reply he discarded the opinions and demands of civilians, or other human authorities. He considered the proper reference to be "to the principles of the law of God." The nature of the pope's demands sufficiently indicate the nature of such an appeal!

The doctrines of Wickliff were now publicly known, and the ecclesiastics had not remained indifferent to the consequences as affecting their interests and their power. A number of his opinions were censured by the pope, and in June 1377, a bull was issued, addressed to the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of London, the king, and the university of Oxford, in which the pope required that Wickliff should be seized and imprisoned under the papal authority, that his confession should be made, distinct information of his tenets obtained, and that he should be detained in custody until further instructions were sent concerning him. If he were not apprehended, citations were to be issued, commanding his attendance before the pope within six months; the utmost care was to be taken to prevent the king and the nobility from being defiled with his errors. These mandates, however, were not made public till after the parliament succeeding just mentioned.

These harsh mandates, it will be observed, treat Wickliff as a criminal already condemned; the prelates were merely to consider themselves privately whether Wickliff had taught the doctrines imputed to him. Such was the inquisitorial policy of the ecclesiastics! The university of Oxford did not receive the mandate without considerable hesitation, though accompanied by an especial letter from the pope, lamenting that tares were to grow up among the pure wheat in that seat of learning, even to grow ripe, without any care being applied to root them up. Not the smallest intention of placing Wickliff in the

mother, forbad the bishops from proceeding to an sentence.

On this occasion Wickliff delivered a written statement of his opinions, which has been unfairly represented as an attempt to evade the consequences of his doctrines by evasive and explanations. This is not correct:—many things were laid to his charge which he knew not; some were untrue while other opinions he had not yet maintained. To give an explanation of his real views was, therefore, a proof of honesty rather than of artifice; and it is by no means certain that the document has come down to us without mutilation from the original. Yet, if the whole be attended to, and allowance made for the scholastic forms of argument, from which Wickliff has not been emancipated, his statements will not be considered evasive. These articles are given at length by Lewis, and singham, and are fully abstracted by Vaughan. If any one finds less distinct reference than he expected to the grounds of the christian faith, he must not be surprised. In the Romish church has usually kept these all important points out of sight; or rather they are admitted in form, while they are denied. The points controverted with Wickliff were related to the authority of the pope and the powers of the papal hood; the doctrine of transubstantiation was the great point of inquiry in the sixteenth century. Few, excepting Luther, succeeded in bringing their opponents into direct discussion on the point which in fact was the main subject at issue, whether salvation was to be obtained only by faith in Christ, or whether other mediators and means of remission of sins were to be looked to. Of Wickliff's explanations it will suffice to say that so far from having made decided statements, and then retracting them by subsequent explanations, he repeated in his sermons and treatises the sentiments deemed most obnoxious, which he afterwards professed his readiness to retract, if his conclusions were to be opposed to the faith.*

The papal authority at this time suffered from other attacks in addition to the attacks of the advocates of reformation. The death of pope Gregory XI. in March 1378, a schism which exhibited the church of Rome with two, and afterwards with three different heads at the same time; each pretending infallibility, and all denouncing curses against their opponents in most awful terms. To the death of Gregory XI. succeeded

A. D. 1378.]

His sickness and recovery.

distractions, the escape of Wickliff from the vengeance of the clergy, may partly be attributed. The general feeling of necessity for reformation was also promoted, and Wickliff not wanting in exertions to expose the vain and wicked pretensions of these unchristian pretenders to infallibility. In an entitled, "On the schism of the popes," he made a direct attack upon the papal usurpations.

Amidst these labours and persecutions Wickliff was overtaken by sickness. While at Oxford he was confined to his chamber, and reports of his approaching dissolution were circulated. The mendicants considered this to be a favourable opportunity for obtaining a recantation of his declarations against them. They perhaps concluded that the sick-bed of Wickliff would reveal many others they had witnessed, and that their power would there be felt and acknowledged. A doctor from each of the privileged orders of beggars, attended by some of the civil authorities of the city, entered the chamber of Wickliff. They expressed sympathy for his sufferings, with hopes for his recovery. They then suggested that he must be aware of the wrongs the mendicants had experienced from him, especially by his sermons and other writings; as death now appeared at hand, they concluded that he must have feelings of compunction on this account, therefore they expressed their hope that he would not neglect his penitence, but distinctly recall whatever he had hitherto said against them.

The suffering reformer listened to this address with attention. When it was concluded, he made signs for his attendants to enter him in his bed, then fixing his eyes on the mendicants, he summoned all his remaining strength, and loudly exclaimed, "I will not die, but live, and shall again declare the evil deeds of the friars." The appalled doctors, with their attendants, fled from the room, and they speedily found the prediction true. The scene would afford a striking subject for an able artist.

While Wickliff strongly censured the fabulous legendary crafty delusions practised by these orders, he by no means neglected the means of usefulness they so much misapplied. He was not less distinguished as a preacher, than as a theologian and a controversialist. Milton well speaks of Wickliff's preaching as a saving light at which succeeding reformers effectually quenched their tapers.

state referred to him by the highest authorities of the church. That he was an active preacher is evident, and there is no doubt but that he discharged the other duties of his office according to what he has himself pointed out to be the duty of a christian man, “to visit those who are sick, or who are especially those whom God hath made needy by age, or by sickness, as the feeble, the blind, and the lame, who are unable to do otherwise. These thou shalt relieve with thy goods after thy power, to their need, for thus biddeth the gospel.” Upon the importance of preaching, in all ages of the church, it is unnecessary to say; but certainly it was peculiarly important in those times, when a little but oral instruction could be imparted, and the invention of printing was unknown.

Wickliff’s sermons are seldom to be considered as essays on particular subjects; frequently they are only sketches of his discourses, but they are almost invariably what are called postills—discourses founded upon passages of scripture, the method of which is the most usual, both in the primitive church and among the reformers who followed Wickliff. In general, they are founded upon the gospel, the epistle, or the lessons of the day, and are supposed to have been delivered at Lutterbury during the eight years he was rector of that place. They are strictly of a popular character, as will be seen by the perusal of the present volume. In one of these discourses he speaks of the labours of Christ and his apostles as teachers, and is touched upon in a manner which shows that he recollects similar proceedings in the times in which he lived, and the testimonies of historians inform us that the teachers and Lollards went about in this manner, testifying of the kingdom of heaven. He says, “The gospel telleth us of the duty which falls to all the disciples of Christ, and also how priests, both high and low, should occupy themselves in the church of God and in serving him. And first, Jesus himself indeed the lessons which he taught. The gospel telleth us that Jesus went about in the places of the country, both in the great, as in cities and castles, or small towns, and thus to profit generally unto men, and not to forbear to preach to the people because they are few, and our name may not be in vain, but to be great. For we should labour for God, and

A. D. 1383.] *His translation of the scriptures.*

Another still more important labour of Wickliff claims attention—his translation of the scriptures into the English tongue, which occupied him for many years. It was completed in 1383. The first honour of this great undertaking belongs to Wickliff, and no event recorded in the annals of England can be compared with it for importance. The attempts by others had neither been numerous nor extensive. They were only versions of the psalms and some other portions of the scriptures, and detract not from the labour or merit of Wickliff's performance.* A well-known passage from the historical works of Knighton, a canon of Leicester, the contemporary of Wickliff, contains evidence upon this subject too decisive not to be repeated here. He says, "Christ delivered his gospel to the apostles and doctors of the church, that they might administer to the rich and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times and the wants of man. But this master John Wickliff translated it out of Latin into English, and thus laid it more open to the laity, and to women who can read, than it formerly had been to the most learned of the clergy, even to those of them who had the best understanding. And in this way the gospel of Christ is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious both to clergy and laity, is rendered contemptible, were the common jest of both! The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity."

The cautious English historian of modern Romanists expresses the same opinion as Knighton, though in more guarded language. He says, "Wickliff made a new translation, (of the scriptures) multiplied the copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his 'priests,' recommended it to the perusal of their hearers. In his hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men were attracted by the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrine insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in the higher classes who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated, and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution, which in little more than a century astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe."

In conformity to these apprehensions, the advocates of the church of Rome have ever denounced in terms more or

knew that no method could be devised so effectual to bring men wise unto salvation, as to supply them with the Word. What assistance he had in this work is not known. It is evident that copies were multiplied with a rapidity which we hardly appreciate at the present day.

From the register of Alnwick, bishop of Norwich, it appears that the cost of a testament of Wickliff's version was 2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.* (equal to more than 20*l.* of our present money). At that time five pounds were considered a sufficient allowance for the annual maintenance of a tradesman, yeoman, or clerk. In the persecution under bishop Longland, in 1521, with imprisonment and penalties, perhaps death, followed the mere possession of the work, the accusation against one man was his having purchased shillings for a bible in English, probably only some few books.

This translation was made from the Latin vulgate. No persons then were acquainted with the original language of the scriptures. Wickliff took considerable pains to collect and procure as correct a text as possible for his version.

The circulation of the English scriptures was so rapid among the clergy, that in 1390 the prelates brought forward a bill in the house of lords, for suppressing Wickliff's translations. John de Lancaster is said to have interfered on this occasion, declaring, "We will not be the dregs of all, seeing that all nations have the law of God, which is the law of our faith, in their own language." He added that he would not consent to having the divine law in our own tongue, against those who should be, who first brought in the bill. The bill, seconded by others, was thrown out. Three years previously, in 1387, a severe statute had been revived, which is thus described in a prologue for the English version, written by one of Wickliff's followers: "Alas, the greatest calamity that ever was heard among christian clerks is proposed in England by worldly clerks and feigned religious, the chief university of our realm, as many true men tell us, wailing. This horrible and devilish cursedness is perpetrated by Christ's enemies, and traitors of all christian people. No man shall learn divinity, or holy writ, but he that hath no form in art, that is, who hath commenced in arts, and is not regent two years after. Thus it would be nine or ten years before he might learn holy writ."

A. D. 1381.] *He opposes Transubstantiation.*

of men. Nor should it be forgotten that tumults of a far sanguinary description, and marked by deeper atrocities about this period raged in France and Flanders, where the trines of our reformer were unknown. Froissart, a contemporary historian, attributes the proceedings of the English insurgents to the example set them on the continent. Other atrocious crimes perpetrated as national acts in neighbouring countries, with our own recollection, might be referred to, were it at all need to show that tumults and rebellions are not the results of opposition to popery ;* but it ever has been a favourite plan of that class to endeavour dexterously to fasten upon its adversaries the guilt which properly appertains to itself.

Wickliff's opposition to the dogma of transubstantiation is to be noticed. This doctrine was first openly maintained in the west, by Radbert, a French monk in the ninth century, but was not fully sanctioned by the church of Rome till the third Lateran council, under Innocent III. in 1215. So doubtful had the church been at first respecting this doctrine, that one of them feigned a revelation from the virgin in opposition to it.

One of the Saxon homilies thus states the doctrine held in the early English church upon this subject: " Much (difference) between the body Christ suffered in, and the body hallowed in housell, (the sacrament ;) this latter being only his spiritual body gathered of many corns, without blood or bone, without soul ; and therefore nothing is to be understood thereof bodily, but all is to be spiritually understood."

Transubstantiation was not held by the Anglo-Saxon church but had been introduced after the Norman conquest, by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury. Wickliff had touched upon this subject in some of his treatises, the most popular of which, his " Works," forms a part of the present volume, but he brought his views forward with increased activity in his divinity lectures during the spring of 1381, when he published a series of conclusions in which he called the attention of the members of the university to the subject. In these he stated that " the consecrated host, which

* Vaughan has examined this subject very fully. He relates several instances of tumultuary insurrections evidently proceeding from the fanaticism of popery. The real cause of the tumults in England probably, was rightly stated by the parliament: " These insurrections

see upon the altar, is neither Christ nor any part of his effectual sign of him." On these conclusions Wickliff dispute publicly.

In his *Triologus*, (lib. iv. ch. 7.) Wickliff represents reasoning thus respecting transubstantiation. "Sho so far beguile the faithful of the church, by the aid of my vicegerent, as to persuade them to deny that this is bread, and to induce them to regard it merely as an empty vessel, there will be nothing then which I may not bring them to, since there can be nothing more opposite to the scriptures than common discernment. Let the life of a prelate then be such, may, let him be guilty of luxury, simony, or murder, may be led to believe that really he is no such man; may then be persuaded to admit, that the pope is infallible, at least with respect to the matters of christian faith, and as much as he is known by the name of Most Holy Father, of course free from sin." How completely had the mind of Wickliff discerned the dreadful consequences of this monstrous doctrine, which represents a piece of bread as containing the flesh and blood, and even the soul and divinity of our blessed Lord!

A convention of Romish doctors speedily assembled, and the doctrines of Wickliff were condemned, as may easily be seen. Sentences of excommunication and imprisonment were pronounced against all members of the university who should defend his tenets, or even be convicted of listening to arguments in his favour.

This assembly was held in private; its determination was communicated to Wickliff while engaged in lecturing his pupils. He paused for a moment, and then again challenged his opponents to a fair discussion of the subject; declaring that if they were made to silence him by force, he would appeal to the king for protection.

Courtney, who had been recently appointed archbishop of Canterbury, in May, 1382, called a synod to consider the certain strange and dangerous opinions then widely spread among both the nobility and the commons of England. The well-known hatred to Wickliff sufficiently indicated the views of the court. The synod was held at the Grey Friars, in London.

A. D. 1382.] *Enactments against the Lollards.*

in the hearts of reprobate men, but by the condemnation of the kingdom has been cleared, but not without irksomeness and great commotion."

The assembled divines were thus reassured, and the accusations imputed to Wickliff were condemned as erroneous and heretical. The sentence denounced against all who should preach, or defend his tenets, was promulgated with the solemnities, and addressed to all places subject to the see of Canterbury. These fulminations were communicated to the university of Oxford, but the chancellor and many of its leading members were attached to the reformer, and the public discourses of the university highly commended the character and doctrine of Wickliff.

The state of public affairs strengthened the efforts of the clergy; a few months before, they had procured the enactment of a law by the parliament, which provided for the punishment of those who preached what the ecclesiastics denominated Lollardry. The preamble of the statute evidently refers to the labours of Wickliff and his followers of Wickliff, and to the promulgation of such doctrines as he advanced. They were extensively diffused: a contemporary historian represents every second person in the kingdom infected with his heresies, and in Wickliff's confession respecting the sacrament, he implies that a third part of the clergy held similar opinions.

The statute sets forth, that divers evil persons went from county to county, and town to town, in certain habits, under dissimulation of great holiness, without license of the ordinaries or other authorities, preaching daily, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places, where great congregations were assembled, divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, &c. &c. It was therefore enacted that all such preachers, and also their favourers, maintainers, and abettors, should be "arrested, and held in strong prison, until they "justify themselves according to the law and reason of the church," before the prelates.

This law was passed by the lords, but never had the assent of the commons, so that in reality it was both informal and invalid. In the following October it was revoked and laid aside; but the archbishop procured letters patent from the king, whereby

like desire of the popish ecclesiastics to persecute for sake.

Courtney having arranged his machinery for persecuted Rigge, the chancellor of Oxford, and Bright his doctors, to answer for their late conduct respecting and Rippington, who had advocated the cause of Wickliff, some hesitation, they were induced to assent to the arrangement sanctioned by the synod. The chancellor was enjoined for Wickliff, Hereford, Rippington, Ashton, and Reby ecclesiastical censures, and canonical penalties to compel to abjure. Meanwhile, the archbishop proceeded in the execution of Hereford and Ashton; the former had assisted Wickliff in his translation of the scriptures, the latter was viewed throughout the kingdom as a laborious and successful promoter of the gospel.

Wickliff then resided at Lutterworth. In one of his letters he refers to these persecutions. Speaking of Courtney, great bishop of England, who is incensed because God's word is written in English to unlearned men," he adds, "He persecuteth a certain priest because he writeth to men this English word, moneth him, and travaileth him, so that it is hard for him to bear it. And thus he pursueth another priest, by the name of pharisees, because he preacheth Christ's gospel freely, without fables." Hereford appears to have escaped from the "furnace of death," probably through the influence of the duke of Lancaster, but he, outwardly at least, reconciled himself to the persecutions, as he was among the clergy who, in 1391, signed a statement upon one of the Lollards, named Walter Brute, who still retained an attachment to the doctrines of Wickliff. Rippington acted in a similar manner, but Ashton died before he lived, a follower of the truth, before the clergy had proceeded so far as openly to bring the Lollards to the stake. The accounts respecting these men, however, are contradictory, and the stories appear to have attributed to them greater concessions than they really made, a practice not unfrequent with the papal Rome. Some further particulars respecting them will be given in another part of this work.

The conduct of the clergy, and the means they had used, are thus described by Wickliff in one of his discourses.

A. D. 1382.] *Condemned by a council at Oxford.*

be struck. Thus situated, he resolved to appeal to the king's parliament, in the form of a petition. This document contained opinions for which some protestant writers have too hastily inclined to censure the reformer, without considering the situation in which matters then stood, or the characters whom Wickliff denounced as worldly priests and of the congregation of Satan.

The proceedings against Wickliff are not very clearly stated, but it appears that in 1382, a council of prelates and clerics was held in the church of the preaching friars at London as above mentioned, and a similar council was afterwards assembled at Oxford, to take measures for remedying certain disorders which were extending rapidly through the whole community. Courtney having made the requisite preparations, Wickliff was summoned to appear, that he might answer for his opinions. The king's prelate laid his plans, so as to deprive Wickliff of the support and countenance he had hitherto received. While the nobles supported the church on points of worldly interest, they gladly encouraged Wickliff in his opposition, though it originated from higher sources than those of a secular nature; but at this period, the duke of Lancaster felt that it was his interest to terminate further hostilities with the clergy, and as Courtney had taken the matters at issue on points of doctrine, the duke advised Wickliff to submit to the prelates in all points of that nature. When human aid failed the reformer, as might be expected. The king may contend upon subjects of a religious nature, when his honour is concerned, but not when there is reason to expect only expense and loss for so doing.

Had Wickliff then shrunk from the contest—had he sacrificed the truth to avoid the risk of encountering his adversaries—might have been some ground for characterising him as a timid or a tactical reformer, even though the hesitation had proceeded from age and infirmity rather than from any other source. He shrunk not. The Romish historian Walsingham, who is ever anxious to cast any disgrace he can upon the reformer, represents him as equally withstanding the commands of the duke, and the threats of the primate. He says, that Wickliff in publishing his doctrines on the sacrament of the altar, “*l*

mine answer no man stood with me, but all men for me. With that apostle he experienced that the Lord stood with him, and strengthened him, and he was delivered out of the lion. His defence, as we have seen, was such as to win praise from his adversaries, and his written confession contradicted his former views upon the subject. There were two treatises in Latin, in which he argued the subject after the scholastic method, the other in English, which he drew up so as to be accessible to the people.*

Courtney and his associates probably felt at a loss as to what to do towards the reformer. As yet they had not found a way to subvert him, nor had they arrived at the decision to execute him. Their successors put the summary requisition, "Turbare non debemus." They appear at that time to have contented themselves with terminating Wickliff's connexion with the university of Oxford. A mandate from the king was addressed to the vice-chancellor, dated July, 1382, ordering the expulsion of Wickliff and his adherents from the university, within seven days. The increasing age and infirmities of the reformer indicated that removal from this world, and inclined his enemies to resort to more violent and unpopular measures.

The next proceeding was a summons from the pope to Wickliff to appear before him at Rome. He was afflicted with paralysis to undertake such a journey, and it had not been a desirable plan for him to adopt. He addressed a letter to the pope, professing his faith, expressing his willingness to retract any opinions which might be proved to be erroneous, and his hope that personal appearance before the pontiff would be insisted upon.

Although Wickliff was excluded from Oxford, and age and infirmity rapidly upon him, he did not cease to labour for the souls of men. His translation of the scriptures was completed about this period. The greater part also of his sermons appear to have been composed during the latter part of his life. They were written out, and circulated with a great number of numerous copies of his writings yet remaining, showing to which they must have been transcribed, especially when we consider that the Romish clergy destroyed not a few.

Among these pieces is an address written against the pope, in which, commenting on the text "Beware of the leaven,"

A. D. 1382.] *His perilous situation, and death.*

crusades, or military expeditions for the recovery of the holy land from the infidels. These military expeditions were represented as equally meritorious, and were designated by the same name, while all the nefarious practices employed in support of the crusades were employed on the present occasion. The bishop of Norwich raised a considerable army by the bulls of pope John, promising full remission of sins, and a place in paradise to all who assisted his cause by money or in person! This prelate headed his troops, and invaded France, by which the pope's dominion was supported. But his campaign was unsuccessful: he returned to England in a few months with scanty remains of his army, and was the subject of general derision.

Against such proceedings Wickliff spoke boldly. He said, "Christ is a good shepherd, for he puts his own life for the sheep. But antichrist is a ravening wolf, for he ever does the reverse, putting many thousand lives for his own wretched life. By forsaking things which Christ has bid his priests forsake, he might end all this strife. Why is he not a fiend stained for homicide, who, though a priest, fights in such a cause? It is not slaying in others be odious to God, much more in priests. They should be the vicars of Christ. And I am certain that neither the pope, nor all the men of his council, can produce a single reason to prove that he should do this." Wickliff speaks of two popes, as fighting, one against the other, with the most shameful leasings (or falsehoods) that ever sprang out of a man's mouth. But "they were occupied," he adds, "many years before in their own iniquity, and in sinning against God and his church. And as they made them to sin more, as an ambling blind horse, who beginneth to stumble, continues to stumble until he casts himself down." Several passages written by Wickliff at this time express his condemnation of all warfare unless in self-defence, and as sanctioned by the new testament. The scenes of slaughter, cruelty, and profligacy, occasioned by this papal schism, are related by historians.

The danger incurred by Wickliff in his proceedings, no greater than ever, but he pursued his course with stedfastness to the last. "The language of his conduct" has been described, as being to this effect: "To live, and to be si-

the attention of all the leading characters, and Wickliff permitted to pass the short remainder of his days without molestation from the hand of violence. He had also a constant friend in Anne of Bohemia, queen of Richard II., who was elevated by her piety and blameless conduct. For two years previous to his decease, Wickliff was paralytic, and had the assistance of a curate named Purvey, who partook of his master's services, but he continued himself to officiate. It is said that he was engaged in distributing the bread of the Lord's supper, when seized with the last and fatal attack of paralysis. He was once deprived of consciousness and the power of speech, and after a brief struggle, his spirit left the earth, and found a refuge in another and a better world. He was taken ill on the 29th, and died on the 31st of December, 1384.

Wickliff was buried in peace, but in the year 1415 the pope of Constance ordered his remains to be disinterred, and thrown from consecrated ground. This was not enforced till 1440, by command of the pope, forty-four years after his interment; his bones were dug up, and burnt to ashes, which were cast into the brook hard by. Fox observes, "And so were dissolved into three elements, earth, fire, and water; they were thereby to abolish both the name and doctrine of Wickliff forever. Not much unlike to the example of the old pharisee sepulchre knights, who when they had brought the Lord to his grave, thought to make him sure never to rise again. And all others must know, that as there is no council against the Lord; so there is no keeping down of verity, but it will rise up and come out of dust and ashes, as appeared right well in our man. For though they digged up his body, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes, yet the word of God and truth of his doctrine, with the fruit and success thereof they could not suppress, which yet TO THIS DAY, for the most part of his articles remain, notwithstanding the transitory body and bones of him who was thus consumed and dispersed."

Some further observations on this treatment of the remains of this illustrious reformer, with a brief account of his principles, and a sketch of the measures progressively adopted for the suppression of the truths he had advocated, will be found in the latter part of the present volume. His writings and the

His writings.

who wrote a century and a half subsequent to Wickliff, states that he had seen more than a hundred and fifty works, partly in Latin and partly in English, and that he had ascertained the titles of more than a hundred others. Of the latter, however, most probably, were only different names for pieces which Bale had seen; for amongst the manuscripts existing, the same piece is sometimes designated by more than one title. Lewis has transcribed Bale's catalogue, noticed the pieces he was acquainted with, and adding others which he found in the list to nearly three hundred. The catalogue given by Lewis is more correct; it is drawn up with much care from a perusal and examination of many of the works of Wickliff, and contains one hundred and eighty articles.

But the list of Wickliff's writings most useful to the reader, has been compiled by Vaughan, who with much pains and labour examined the writings of the reformer yet in existence, and made himself better acquainted with their contents than any other person appears to have done during the last four centuries. It is not difficult to ascertain that the principal works attributed to Wickliff are his genuine productions. Many are expressly mentioned in the public documents intended to suppress his opinions, while others possess sufficient internal evidence.

Printing had not then been discovered, copies could not be increased by the slow process of writing, while his enemies were indefatigable in their endeavours to destroy them, yet the writings were so numerous, and so much valued, that nearly the whole of his writings are still extant—a sufficient proof, if any were wanting, that the doctrines he taught were widely diffused and esteemed. Nor was this confined to England; copies are to be found in public libraries on the continent. Subinco Lepus, a monk of Prague, burned more than two hundred volumes, many of which were richly adorned, the property of persons of the higher classes in Bohemia. It also appears that the greater part of the writings of Wickliff that have not come down to us were treated of philosophical or scholastic subjects, which were little prized except by the students of that period, while the copies of Wickliff's writings which remain, seem to have been preserved by the laity. Many of these are large volumes, and could not have been written without much labour and cost.

Wickliff manuscripts, are the little books written with elegance, but which evidently were designed for the instruction of souls, thirsting in secret for the waters. The tattered and well used appearance of many of the volumes, is an indisputable testimony to the correctness of the allegations in the bishop's registers of the next two centuries as to the manner in which these "pestilent books" were destroyed by the followers of the truth, till, by the invention of the printing press, copious supplies of other religious tracts were brought forward.

Wickliff's principal work, the translation of the bible, has been already noticed. Copies of the whole or of portions are found in several public, and in some private libraries. A very beautiful and perfect specimen is preserved in the royal library in the British Museum, (Bib. Reg. I. c. v.) A new testament has been printed, in 1731 and 1810, but a literal reprint, in the original orthography, it is only to be found in a few libraries. Specimens of his version will be found in the appendix. As a work for popular use, Wickliff's bible now is wholly superseded by later translations.*

The *Triologus* is the work next in importance. It consists of dialogues between three persons, characterised as Reason, or Truth, Pseudis, or Falsehood, and Phronesis, or Wisdom. Truth represents a sound divine, and states questions; Pseudis urges the objections of an unbeliever; Wisdom decides the questions. This work probably contains the substance of Wickliff's divinity lectures, with considerable additions. It is almost every doctrine connected with the theology of the middle ages treated however in the scholastic form then universal. Very unattractive to modern readers, it was doubtless an important and useful work. As Turner observes, "It was the work of an academician, reasoning with the ideas of the reformers. It is evident that Wickliff wrote this work under a decided impression that his efforts for the truth were likely to be crowned with martyrdom. It was printed in 1524. Copies are rare. The work was actively sought for by the Romanists, and a specimen will be found in a subsequent page. The remark of Baber is but too applicable to the method of writing this work is written. "The scholastic theology which vied at this period, was a species of divinity which obscured

His writings.

guage. A good summary of the contents of the Trial given by Vaughan.

Only one other of Wickliff's writings appears to have been printed at the period of the reformation—his *Wicket*, a treatise on the Lord's supper, which will be found in the present collection. This was among the most influential of his writings, as appears from the frequent mention of it in those records of persecution, the bishops' registers.

His treatise, *Of the Truth of Scripture*, is a very valuable performance. It is in Latin: only two manuscript copies are known to exist; one in the Bodleian library at Oxford, the other in Trinity College, Dublin. The latter is the preferable copy, and is described as containing two hundred and forty-four double columned pages, of nearly a thousand words in each page. It would therefore be equal in contents to a common octavo volume of more than seven hundred pages. It abounds in contradictions, but is fairly and legibly written. Fox the martyrologist possessed a copy which he intended to translate and print. Vaughan describes this work as embodying almost every sentiment popular to the reformer. James made considerable use of its contents in his apology for Wickliff, but it was neglected by Lewis in his accurate edition, with a correct translation, would be exceedingly valuable. The extent of this piece wholly precluded its insertion in the present collection, even in an abridged form.

Another useful and popular work in its day, was the *Caution*. This is a collection of English tracts, which were widely circulated. Several copies of the whole, or of detached portions, are in existence, but only a few sentences from its pages have hitherto been printed. This neglect has probably arisen from the little reference it contains to the controversies in which Wickliff was constantly engaged, and to which perhaps an undue prominence has been given by Lewis, and other early biographers. This valuable memorial of the reformation will be found in the present volume.

Many of Wickliff's homilies or postills have been preserved, though they appear rather to have been written down by his hearers, than to be finished copies prepared by himself. (See p. 24.)

Wickliff's other writings need not here be mentioned minutely. His *Memorial to the King and Parliament*, and *Obiection* to the Friars, were printed by I.

troversial pieces. The following note is prefixed :
 book are gathered together all the sharp treatises concerning
 errors and defaults which John Wickliff did find in
 specially in the clergy and religious, and in other estates
 world.”*

At the period when Wickliff wrote, the English language
 begun to recover from the disuse into which it had fallen
 the time of the Conquest many French and other foreign
 and phrases were introduced by the higher ranks, who
 used the French language, but the lower orders adhered
 closely to the Saxon phraseology. Mr. Baber observes
 of the works of Wickliff, written by him in his
 tongue, will be perused with interest and admiration by
 curious in the history of the English language, for
 English will, I apprehend, be found upon strict examination
 be more pure than that of contemporary writers. Wickliff
 he wrote in his native tongue, did it not for the benefit
 tiers and scholars, but for the instruction of the less learned
 tion of the people. He therefore, as much as possible
 all ‘strange English,’ and was studious to express his
 diction simple and unadorned ; at the same time avoiding
 charge of a barbarous and familiar phraseology.”
 English instead of barbarous Latin, in so large a portion
 writings, gave much efficacy to his exertions for the
 welfare of his countrymen.

A specimen of Wickliff’s writings in their original
 phy, will be found in two extracts from his version of
 testament in the following pages. At first they will be
 hardly intelligible to the reader unaccustomed to the
 that day. But on closer examination, it will be found
 the Saxon terminations, expletives, and a few peculiarities
 removed, the language is, as it has been well characterized
 defiled English ;” in fact, very similar to the language
 rural districts at the present day. To have printed the
 tracts exactly in the form in which they were written
 have rendered them useless for the purposes of the present
 lection. It was necessary to remove some of the peculiarities
 just adverted to, but further the editor had no wish to
 and he felt the necessity of retaining the precise words

Doctrines taught by Wickliff.

present collection. Many others were selected for the same purpose, but the limits of the work prevented their insertion.

It is deeply to be regretted, that a complete edition of Wickliff's writings never has been printed. Such a monument to the illustrious individual to whom we perhaps are indebted more than to any other, for the gospel light and religious we enjoy. Milton says, "A good book is the precious life of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to live beyond life." Surely the writings of Wickliff ought not to be suffered to perish. A much smaller sum than in many instances has been vainly expended in monumental attempts to preserve the remembrance of persons whose names in a few years have been almost entirely forgotten, would suffice to complete a national memorial record of our great reformer, "lasting than brass." But, blessed be the Most High, when we look around, in every circumstance which endears to us the Protestant faith of our land, we are reminded of JOHN WICKLIFF.

To use the words of Henry Wharton, "Wickliff was a man than whom the christian world in these last ages has not produced a greater; and who seems to have been placed as much in praise as he is above envy."

Doctrines taught by Wickliff.

The doctrines taught by Wickliff have been continually misrepresented by papists, and often misunderstood by protestants. They may be stated as follows:—

Wickliff's FAITH was derived from the scriptures. He considered them as a divine revelation, containing a sufficient perfect rule of christian belief and practice. The authority of scripture he esteemed to be superior to any other writing, or any tradition. He considered the canonical books alone as inspired. He urged that all truth is contained in scripture, that no conclusion was to be allowed unless sanctioned by sacred records.

The pope's authority, or right to interfere in temporal concerns, he wholly rejected, and considered that it was

opposed the extravagant authority claimed by the hierarchy, considering it as antichrist, whether usurped by the pope or the clergy at large, while he strongly urged the respect due to consistent and holy ministers of the word. He urged that the laity ought not to be accounted lords over God's heritage, but that ministers and stewards of their heavenly Master.

He supported the king's supremacy over all prelates and ecclesiastics, in temporal matters. He never taught anything contrary to the legal rights of property.

He sometimes mentions the sacraments as seven, but lays the stress upon two, baptism and the Lord's supper. On the latter he spoke so lightly, as to be accused by his enemies of despising them. His opinion of the Lord's supper is stated in his *Trilogia* and his Confession. The doctrine of transubstantiation he rejected.

He approved outward worship, and public assembly for the purpose, but condemned the superstitious rites of the church. He disapproved the church music then in vogue, which was elaborate, often trifling, and opposed to the feelings.

He admitted the doctrine of purgatory—that early rejected the most corrupt and profitable part of the doctrine, that the sufferings of purgatory may be shortened by the prayers of men or the intercessions of saints. According to his doctrine it was rather the doctrine of an intermediate state, or popish purgatory, which he condemns as "pious fraud." As he advanced in life, his views on this subject became clearer and scriptural. (See extract from Dr. James, p. 100.) In Wickliff's tract, *Of the church of Christ, her members, and governance*, he says, "The second part of the church is in purgatory, and these sin not anew, but purge themselves. And many errors are fallen in praying for these souls, since they are all dead in body, Christ's words may be applied to them, Let us follow Christ in our life, and let the dead be dead." This widely differs from the doctrine of the church of Rome, thus determined by the council of Trent; "The souls detained in purgatory are assisted by the suffrages of the faithful, and most especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar."

Doctrines taught by Wickliff.

its clergy. His opinions respecting the papacy are stated p. 184.

Wickliff is accused of wishing to deprive the church of property, by what he has said upon the subject of tythes. His were simply these. It is reasonable that the priest should have a suitable provision, besides the mere necessities of food and clothing. He allowed that dymes (or tythes) and offerings are a part, and that priests should live on them, but he urges the principal cause for which tythes and offerings should be paid, was curates teaching their parishioners in word and example." When, however, the curates were wicked and neglected their duty, he considered that the tythes might be withheld from them, though they ought to be devoted to the service of God. It should not be forgotten, that the priesthood taught that men should have the divine blessing in this life and heaven hereafter, if they duly paid their tythes and offerings. The reader who wishes a fuller account of Wickliff's opinion on this subject may refer to his biographers.*

He condemned the blasphemous adjurations then so common: this has occasioned his being misrepresented as asserting that judicial oaths were unlawful, whereas he expressly declared that it is lawful to make oath by God Almighty in a proper case.

Of the election of grace he thus speaks in his *Dialogus*: "We are predestinated, that we may obtain divine acceptance, and become holy; having received that grace through Christ's human nature, whereby we are rendered finally pleasing to God. And it appears that this grace, which is called the grace of final destination, or the charity of final perseverance, cannot ever means fail."

On the great doctrines of Justification and Merit, Dr. Johnson quotes passages, which prove Wickliff to have taught "that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient for salvation, and without faith it is impossible to please God; that the merit of Christ is able, by itself, to redeem all mankind from hell; that this sufficiency is to be understood without any other concurring; he persuaded men therefore to trust wholly to Christ, to rely altogether upon his sufferings, not to seek to be justified but by his righteousness; and that by participation in his righteousness, all men are righteous." Dr. James adds "In the

thy mercy, Lord, not to our merits, but to thy mercy. Give us grace to know that all thy gifts are of grace. Our flesh, though it seem holy, yet it is not so. All are originally sinners, as Adam, and in Adam; cleaveth faster to us than Naaman's did to Gehazi. According to his teaching, we all are sinners, not only from birth but before, so that we cannot so much as think a good work unless Jesus the Angel of great counsel send it; nor can we do any good work unless it be properly his good work. He comes before us that we receive grace, and followeth us, and keeping us in grace. So then it is not good to trust in our merits, in our virtues, in our righteousness. To conclude this point, good it is only to trust in God.' "

The foregoing summary of doctrines taught by Wickliff is taken from the statements of Baber, Vaughan, James, and others, who quote passages confirmatory of every point. In the original the reader will find those references; the limits of this volume do not allow them to be inserted here in any form which would be useful. The reader should also again be reminded that he must not expect to find all these opinions clearly set forth in any part of Wickliff's writings. Dr. James, speaking of the influence of some passages give to prayer to saints and the like, serves, "I am persuaded that he retracted these opinions in his latter and more learned works. If ever it be God's pleasure to publish his works, which were cut and mangled, and scattered abroad like Absyrtus' limbs were in the poet, may be brought forth again together again, that we may have the whole body of his secular and religious works, and be able to distinguish the time wherein he wrote, then, I say, we should receive due credit on this point." Vaughan has done much to settle the value of Wickliff's writings, and has thereby shown his gradual progress on several points.

We must not expect to find in Wickliff's writings a complete system of doctrine. Many of his statements taken separately perhaps will appear incorrect, but take them as a whole, and we shall be convinced that he well merited his glorious title of "gospel doctor." For the variations which exist, as Dr. Vaughan observes, "considering the times wherein, and the people to whom he lived, he may easily obtain pardon of any reader." H. Wharton justly observes, "these variations

Testimony of the university of Oxford.

him as "ignorant of the righteousness of faith." He "If by that doctrine Melancthon meant a reliance on the merit of Christ, as the only, and the certain medium for guilty, it is unquestionable that this truth was the favourite the most efficient article in the faith of the English, as well as that of the German reformer. It must be acknowledged that this tenet is more frequently adverted to in the writings of Luther than in those of Wycliffe; and his notices respecting it, are frequently more definite, because distinguishing more completely between the acceptance of offenders in virtue of the Saviour's death, and the growth of devout affections in the heart, and the influence of the divine Spirit. But that such was the effect of the Redeemer's sacrifice, was not more distinctly apprehended by the professor of Wittenberg, than by the rector of Oxford; nor was this truth the source of a more permanent confidence with the one than with the other."

In the history of the reformation, there are perhaps no characters more nearly allied than Wickliff and Luther. Both looked to the holy scriptures as the standard of truth: for human instruction each learned much from the writings of Augustine. The boldness of the German professor was perhaps manifested at an earlier period of life, and the situation in which he was placed more favourable to the permanency of the views wherein he was called to labour; but Wickliff's sun shone brightest when setting, and the decided manner in which he reformed the errors of popery respecting the sacrament, while Luther was wholly freed from their fatal influence, directed the efforts of his followers with undivided attention against the church of Rome. Thus, when the doctrines of the gospel, as taught by the German reformers, were made known in England, the soil was found well prepared. Many among the lower and middle classes were informed on these points, and already had received the truth. The bishops' registers prove how extensive were the results of Wickliff's labours. The records of bishop Longland's prosecutions in 1521, (see Fox) show their effect was not evanescent.

This sketch of the life of Wickliff may be closed with a public testimony given by the university of Oxford, touching the commendation of his great learning and good life."

ordained this buckler and defence against such as and slander other men's doings, that whensoever we of mouth cannot be present, the pen by writing make the same.—

“ Hereupon it followeth, that the special good which we bare unto John Wickliff, sometime child of the university, and professor, of divinity, moving and quickning the minds, as his manners and conditions required no less of his mind, voice, and testimony, we do witness, all his sayings and doings throughout his whole life to have been honest and commendable; whose honest manners and constant foundness of learning, and most redolent renown we do desire the more earnestly to be notified and known unto you, for that we understand the maturity and ripeness of his conversation, his diligent labours and travels to tend to the glory of God, the help and safeguard of others, and the good of the church.

“ Wherefore, we signify unto you by these present words of conversation, even from his youth upward, unto the death, was so praiseworthy and honest, that never was there any note or spot of suspicion noised of him in his answering, reading, preaching, and determining, but himself laudably, and as a stout and valiant champion of the faith; vanquishing, by the force of the scriptures, all their wilful beggary blasphemed and slandered religion. Neither was this doctor convict of any heresy, nor burned of our prelates after his burial. God forbid that our prelates should have condemned a man of such honesty, for which he, who, amongst all the rest of the university, hath written in philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative sciences, an equal. The knowledge of all which and singular things we desire to testify and deliver forth; to the intent that the more renown of the said doctor may be the more evident, and his reputation, amongst them unto whose hands these present words testimonial shall come.

“ In witness whereof, we have caused these our letters testimonial to be sealed with our common seal. Done at London, in our congregation-house, October 1st, 1418.

SPECIMENS
OF
WICKLIFF'S TRANSLATION OF THE B

WICKLIFF's translation of the holy scriptures has been in the preceding pages. The reader is here presented with specimens, strictly conformable to the original words and meaning, which will sufficiently manifest the impossibility of producing a literal transcript of the reformer's writings so as to be useful, or even intelligible to general English readers of the present day.

The twenty-third Psalm (called the twenty-second, according to the numeration of the Septuagint and Vulgate version) and the fourth chapter of Malachi are copied from the beautiful edition of Wickliff's Bible in the British Museum, already mentioned. The Gospel of John i. is transcribed from the Rev. H. Baber's reprint, and the Acts of the Apostles from Lewis's edition of Wickliff's New Testament.

PSALM XXII.

'þe title of þe xxii. salm, þe salm ey þe song of dauid.

The lord gouerneþ me. ⁊ no þing schal fail to me: in þe place of pasture ye he haþ set me. He nurschide me on þe watir of refreisching he conuertide my soule. He ledde me forþ on þe þapis of riztfulnes for his name. For whit þouz y schal go in þe myddis of schaden þe deeth: y schal not drede yuels. for þou art wiþ me. þi zerde a staf: þo han coufortid me. þou hast maad redi aboard in my azens hem þat troblen me. þou hast maad fat myn heed wiþ oyle my cuppe þat filleþ me is ful cleer. And þi merci schal sue me alle þe daies of my lyf. And þt y dwelle in þe hows of þe lord: þe lengþe of daies.

MALACHI IV.

The last chapter of the old testament.

For lo a dai schal come: brēnyng as a chymenei, ⁊ alle proude and alle doynge unpitee: schulen be stobul, and þe dai comynge enflaume hem seiþ þe lord of oostis: which schal not leue to be

1 JON.—CAP. I.

That thing that was fro the bigynnyng, which we herde
 sigen with oure igen, which we biheelden and oure hondis
 the word of liif. and the liif is schewid, and we saigen,
 nessen and tellen to you euerlesting liif that was anentis t
 apperide to us. therefore we tellen to you that thing that v
 herden, that also ye haue felowschip with us and oure fe
 with the fadir and with his sone iesu crist. and we wri
 to you, that ye haue ioie, and that youre ioie be ful. and
 tellyng that we herden of him and tellen to you, that god
 ther ben no derknessis in hym. if we seien that we ha
 with him, and we wandren in derknessis, we lien and doen
 but if we walken in ligt as also he is in ligt we hau felows
 and the blood of iesu crist his sone clenseth us fro al synne
 that we hau no synne we disseyuen ussilff, and treuthe is n
 we knowlechen oure synnes, he is feithful and iust that h
 us oure synnes, and clense us fro al wickidnesse. and if v
 we hau not synned, we maken him a lier, and his word is n

WICKLIFF'S CONFESSION RESPECTING THE SAC
 OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. See p. 32

WE believe, as Christ and his apostles have taug
 the sacrament of the altar, white and round, and
 bread or host unsacred, is very God's body in form of
 if it be broken in three parts as the church uses,
 thousand, every one of these parts is the same God's b
 right so as the person of Christ is very God and very
 Godhead, and very manhead, right so as holy church
 dred winters has trowed,* the same sacrament is
 body, and very bread; as it is form of God's body a
 bread, as Christ and his apostles teach. And therefo
 never nameth it, but when he calls it bread, and he, by
 took his knowledge of God in this: and the argument
 against this sentence, it is easy for a christian man
 And right so it is easy to believe that Christ is

Confession respecting the Sacrament.

was stenenye* to heaven. But it is to be supposed that saints that died in the mean time, before their death were of this error. How great diversity is between us that trow this sacrament is very bread in its kind, and between he that tell us it is an accident without a subject. For before the fiend, the father of leasing,† was loosed, this gabbing never contrived. And how great diversity is between us that trow that this sacrament is very bread in its kind, and mentally God's body, and between heretics that trow and that this sacrament may on no wise be God's body. For surely say, that if this were sooth, Christ and his saints heretics, and the more part of holy church now believeth he and before devout men suppose that this council of friars at London, was with the herydene.§ For they put a heresy on Christ and saints in heaven, wherefore the earth trembled. And a land man's voice answered for God, also it did in time of his passion, when he was condemned to bodily death. Christ and his mother, that in ground hath destroyed all heresies, keep the church in right belief of this sacrament, and move the king and his realm to ask sharply of his clerks this office, that all his sessioners,¶ on pain of losing all their temporalities, tell the king and his realm, with sufficient grounding, what is this sacrament. And all the orders of friars, on pain of their allegiance, tell the king and his realm, with good grounding, what is this sacrament. For I am certain of the third part of the clergy will defend these doubts** that is here said, that they will defend on pain of their lives.

Lewis observes on this confession, "One would wonder how this paper should ever be reckoned a retractation of Dr. Wickliffe by any that had seen and read it, since he so openly maintained in it his opinion of the sacrament, declares his resolution to defend it with his blood, and censures the contrary as heresy. It seems that it was not so understood by Dr. Wickliffe's judges. For very soon after, by the king's authority, he was expelled from the university." Walsingham admits that it was rather a retractation

DR. WICKLIFF'S LETTER OF EXCUSE TO POPE URBAN
(See p. 32.)

I have joyfully to tell all true men the belief that I have always to the pope. For I suppose that if my faith be true and given of God, the pope will gladly conserve it. If my faith be error, the pope will wisely amend it. I suppose this, that the gospel of Christ be part of the body of the church. For I believe that Jesu Christ, that gave in his own blood the gospel, is very God and very Man, and by this it passes all laws. I suppose over this, that the pope be most obedient in the keeping of the gospel among all men that live here. For the pope is the highest vicar that Christ has here in this world. The greatness of Christ's vicars is not measured by worldly wisdom or riches, but by this, that this vicar follows more Christ than any other living; for thus teaches the gospel. That this is the true way of Christ and of his gospel I take as belief, that Christ for whom he walked here was most poor man of all, both in his own and in other's possessions, for Christ says that he had nought for his head on. And over this, I take as belief that no man should follow the pope, nor no saint that is now in heaven, but as he followed Christ, for James and John erred, and Peter sinned. Of this I take as wholesome counsel, that the pope leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ did, and move speedily all his clerks to do so, for thus did Christ teach thus his disciples, till the fiend had blinded them. And if I err in this sentence, I will meekly be amended to the death, if it be skilful for that I hope were good to do. If I might travel in my own person, I would with God go to the pope. But Christ has needed me to the contrary; he has taught me more obedience to God than to man. And I trust of our pope, that he will not be antichrist and reverse Christ's will, this working to the contrary of Christ's will. For if he do so, against reason, by him or any of his, and pursue this way of summoning, he is an open antichrist. And mercifully excused not Peter, that Christ called him Satan; so be it that our pope and wicked counsel excuses not the pope here, if he do so.

THE PROLOGUE.

THIS treatise compiled of a poor caitiff needing the spirit christian people, by the great mercy and help of God, shall men and women of good will, the right way to heaven, without the aid of many books, if they will busy themselves to have it done by their own work thereafter. And as a child desiring to be a learned man, begins first at the ground, that is, at his A, B, C ; so he thus desires to begin at the ground of health,* that is, christian man's belief,† out belief,‡ it is impossible, as St. Paul saith, that any man be saved by belief. But as belief by itself is not sufficient to men's salvation, works, as Christ saith by his apostle St. James.† he proposes to help, to speak upon each of the commandments of God, which are contained in charitable works § that belong to belief. And as it is hard to obtain aught of God in prayer till the man truly lives after his commands, as he saith in the gospel, When I say unto me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say? Then I will not go with thee. Going through the commandments, he thinks, with the help of God, to show forth the prayer that Christ Jesus taught us, that is, the paternoster ; and after these, some short sentences to lead men to heavenly desire ; for thus it behoves to climb, as by divers steps, from the ground of belief, into the keeping of the commandments ; and so up from virtue to virtue till he see the reigning in everlasting bliss. Which may he grant to us, and reigneth, without end, merciful God. Amen.

* Salvation.

† Faith.

‡ James ii. 17—20. From the pages that follow, the reader will see that Wickliffe had no intention to teach that justification

THE

POOR CAITIFF.

ON THE BELIEF.

THE ground of all goodness is stedfast faith, or This, through grace and mercy, is obtained of God. was the principal ground that enabled the woman of naan to obtain health of soul and of body of Christ, for daughter, who was evil treated of a devil, as the gospel witnesseth. And the centurion was much praised of God for the stedfast belief that he had in the power of his head. Faith is likened to the loadstar,* for it sheweth the haven of grace to men rowing in the sea of this world. Faith is the eastern star that leads spiritual kings to the ship Jesus Christ, through withstanding of sin, as the star led three kings when Christ was born. Faith or belief is as a stone lying in the foundation of a strong building that beareth up all the work. For as the building stands stiffly that is well grounded upon a stone, so each virtue and deed is strong when it is grounded upon the solidity of belief. For upon this stone, that is, solid faith, Christ built that he would build his church, that is, man's soul. A man that hath lost his right eye is unable to defend himself in battle, for his shield hides his left eye, and so he is unable to sight to defend himself from his enemy; even so he who has lost the right eye of true faith, is unable to withstand or fight against his spiritual enemy, the devil. Saint

fall into deadly sin. For if a man truly believed after he committed a sin, he should lose one of his eyes, and would through that belief keep himself, and flee from sin. How much more if he believed that God would punish him in body and soul for evermore, if he did sin? If man's belief and trust were firmly set in God, and not in fear of man, fantasies, and fear of this world, would he fear him but little, or not at all. Christ said to his disciples, if their faith were as great as the seed of mustard, they should say to this hill, Pass hence, it should pass, and nothing should be impossible to them. St. Jerome says, faith is likened to the corn of seed. If the corn is not broken, the virtue thereof is not known; but if it is pounded, even the stronger it smelleth: even so, who is firmly grounded in the faith, the more he is tried by persecution, the greater and the more fervent is his belief. Thus if man's faith were as great as the seed, he should remove from himself the hill of all other false deceits of the fiend.

This faith maketh our souls so able to receive God's gifts, that we may get whatever we desire of the Lord. Oh, blessed is the soul that believeth in God, and liveth well, and in well living keepeth true faith. Peter had true faith, he went upon the sea as if it were land; but when the firmness of his faith failed, he began to sink, and therefore Christ reproved him as of little faith. Thus it fares with us, who are staggering and falling with the wind of each temptation or fear. Brethren, let us set all our belief and full trust on God, who is almighty, and not in any vain thing that may be done with time. Trust we stedfastly that nothing may befall us farther than He will suffer it, and all things which shall come for the best. And let no wealth of the world, neither tribulation, draw our hearts from fi-

On the Belief.

will be saved must believe.* The first article of belief Peter put into the creed, saying, *I believe in God, Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.* To believe to is one thing; to believe *in* God, is another. The first both evil men and good men have; but the second only good men have. The fiends believe to God, that he is true, and that his words are truth: and yet good men and women fail of this point! For if they truly believed that the words of God are true, which he speaks in holy writ, against their sinful living, they would amend their defaults, either for dread or for love. To believe *in* God, as St. Augustine saith, is, in belief to cleave to him through love, and to seek busily to fulfil his will; for no man truly believeth in God, but he that loveth God, and by his good living believeth to have bliss of God, as a good doctor saith. And no man sinneth against God but he that fails in belief, which is the ground of all good works. The same doctor saith, In that he is Father, he will not do mercy to men forsaking sin; and in that he is almighty he is ready and of power to punish all those who will not leave their sin. We should believe that God the Father being almighty, without beginning and ending, created heaven, earth, and all creatures, of nought, through his

St. Andrew said, *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.* This article pertains to the Godhead of the second person in the Holy Trinity. We should believe that Jesus Christ the Son, is equal with the Father, without beginning and ending, equal in might, and all in might, equal in goodness, and all one in goodness, that the Son doeth nothing without the Father; and that two persons are one almighty God, without beginning and ending. Jesus Christ, God's Son, and in like manner almighty with God the Father, is said plainly to be our

St. James, the son of Zebedee, said, *I believe conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin*. This is the first article belonging to the manhood. We should believe that Christ, the Son of God, the person of the Holy Trinity, took flesh and blood of the virgin by the Holy Ghost, and came into the world, very God and man together.

St. John the evangelist said, *I believe that he suffered pain under Pontius Pilate, upon the cross, died, and was buried*. Here we should believe that the same Christ, very God and man, in the same flesh that he took of the virgin Mary, endured hard pain and suffering, and bodily death, by the doom of Pilate, judge of the Jews, without impairing of his Godhead. Christ bore hard pain, for we should have sufferance or patience in adversities and tribulations. He suffered meekly, for we should trespass, for we should suffer willingly, who trespass. Christ was crucified, for we should crucify our flesh by penance,* withstanding sins and unlawful desires. Christ died on the cross bodily, that we should die on the cross of penance, withstanding sin to our lives' end.

The cross of penance hath four parts. The first is sorrow for losing the love of God; the second is sorrow for losing the joy of heaven; the third is sorrow for the pain of hell; and the fourth is sorrow for serving the fiend and sin. Christ was buried; let this remind us that we hide our good deeds from the favour and esteem of the world, and remember that the earth is natural enemy and heiritor of our mortal flesh, that our thoughts may be free from the lusts of this world, stedfastly having in mind the dreadful pains and death of Christ.

St. Thomas of India said, *I believe that he descended into hell, and the third day he rose from death to life*. We should believe that Christ's body lay dead in the tomb, with the same flesh that he took of the

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souls that were there, through virtue of the Godhead. He went down into hell, giving us an example that we should go thither by inward thought while we live; having patience upon the bitter pains which are there, that we come thither after this life. Also he rose the third day, in body and soul together, very God and very man, everlastingly. He would not rise before the third day, to show that he was verily dead in body. For if he had risen quickly, it had not been believed that he was verily dead. And as each word of true witnessing is confirmed by the mouth of two or three, so that Christ was verily dead in body, may be known by his lying in the tomb till the third day. On the third day he rose from death, in token that the light of his death had destroyed our double death of Adam and of ourselves; and that we should rise from spiritual death by three manner of medicines; by contrition or sorrow of heart, by confession, and satisfaction.

St. James, the son of Alphaeus, said. *I believe that thou hast ascended to heaven, and there sittest on the right hand of God, the Father almighty.* Here we should believe that Jesus Christ, very God and very man, everlasting. appeared to his disciples after his rising from the dead, teaching them of the kingdom of heaven, and eating with them to show that he was very man as before his death, ascending into heaven raised mankind above all orders of angels. When he ascended to open the gate of heaven, he ascended to show the way to men, and to lead man with him, he ascended to pray the Father for mankind.

St. Philip said, *I believe that he is to come, to dooome quick and dead.* Here we should believe that the Jesus Christ, very God and very man, shall come to judge mankind in the same manner, and with the same words that he suffered and bare with him to heaven, and to doom all mankind, both good and evil, according to

all saints, angels, and fiends, as John Chrysostom men and women shall yield reckoning of all the earth; of all the deeds that they have done; content and to whose worship they wrought them only of great trespasses, but also of those that small. For of each idle word man shall account Christ saith himself. For as Isidore saith, "Each edifies not the hearer turns into peril to the speaker an idle word, as Jerome saith, which profits not the hearer neither the hearer. And since reckoning shall be of such, much more and without comparison, reckoning shall be of sinful speech, as of backbiting, scoffing, false accusing, lying, swearing, cursing, licentious speech. Also man shall yield reckoning of thoughts of his heart that inclined to any sin, as by his prophet. And not only we shall account of that done, which we should not have done, but also of that undone, that we should have done. As those that have not done works of mercy to poor needy folk, nor lent them, nor helped them in their need, as Christ shall rehearse at the doom, as he himself saith.

Also of all the time that man hath in earth, he shall yield reckoning, how he has spent it, as it is written in the psalm mourning.* And therefore saith Bernard, "All the time given to man, God shall seek how he hath spent it." And of the spending time, Anselm speaks, saying to man, "O thou barren and dry tree, worthy everlasting fire, what answer in that day when all the time given to thee shall be asked how thou hast spent it?" Also man shall yield there of all his worldly goods, how he has got them, kept, spent, and lent them. As Christ meaneth by the parable of the ritual understanding of the ten pieces of money and talents. Also of all powers of body, as strength, swiftness, skill of body—in whose service they have been spent.

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the much loved daughter of this King, and ordained honour in the bliss of heaven, if this man keep himself lessly? Therefore God commandeth in the book of that each man carefully keep his own soul. The father and mother also shall account for their children who chastise not; as is expressed in holy writ, how J punished for his sons, because he chastised them not should have done. Also the prelate or the curate shall count for his subjects, how he taught them by living by word; as God saith by his prophet, a great dream be at his doom.

Of the multitude of accusers, man's own conscience which is defiled with sin and not amended, shall accuse him, not privily but openly. Also a man's own sins which he would not leave, shall accuse him. As a stolen thief to a thief's neck, accuses him, so shall sins not amended this life accuse sinful wretches. Also holy writ shall tell them that knew it, and heard it, and lived not thereby. Such shall bear with them the sentence of condemnation. Uriah bare with him the sentence of his own death.* in example hereof Christ said, that Moses' law shall be to the Jews. Also God's creatures which a man has gotten out of measure and in sin, shall accuse him thereof. He be as ready to take vengeance upon him as they were to serve him. The fiends also shall be ready there, against sinful men and women, for they, as traitors, enticed them to sin, and when the sin is done they will accuse them thereof. And therefore in the book of Revelation the first is called accuser of christian men. And as Augustine saith then shall the adversary say, "Thou righteous Jew, I doom these to be mine for sin which they have wrought who would not be thine by grace. Thine they were by nature, for thou madest them of nought, but mine they are now, through sin and wretchedness, which they wrought. Thine they were, for by thy passion thou brought them into sin."

Also the benefits which men have received who did not worship him with due service for accuse them, and be alleged against them. shown in holy writ where the angel came to the weeping,* (by which place is understood the there shall be weeping and wailing, as John saith in the book of Revelation.) And there he rehearsed the which God hath done to the people, and reproved the people, for they had not them in mind, and worshipped not for them. And the torment which Christ suffered at the time of his passion, both wounds, cross, nails, and death, shall accuse sinful men, as Bernard saith.

Therefore all christian people have stedfast minds in this sentence, and flee the unlawful lusts of your covetings, and deceits of this deceivable world; and have ye stedfastly in mind, that Christ shall be in the judgment, stern as a lion to wicked men's doom both quick and dead. Of the great dread of that day God speaks by the prophet Joel. The day of the Lord shall be a great day of deliverance, a day of wrath, and of vengeance, of misery, of bitterness; the day of mourning and of accusing, the day of dread and of the day of crying and of sorrow, the day of darkness, the day of mourning, the day of calamity and of bitterness, the day of parting from God for ever, as Anselm saith.

St. Bartholomew said, *I believe in the Holy Ghost*, we should believe that the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Holy Trinity, is very God, without beginning, and equal in wisdom, might, and goodness to the Father and the Son, and that these three persons of the Holy Trinity are one almighty God; and each one is all and all one might; and endless good, and all goodness; and endless truth, and endless wisdom, and all love, and endless righteous, and endless merciful, and all truth, one wisdom, one beauty, one love.

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of saints, that is, that each of the three parts of holy takes part of the other's goodness, and helps the other. The part that is in heaven helps the other two parts living for them, as Bernard saith; and the other two are said to help them that are in heaven, when the love and joy is increased by the fellowship of the others: the more there are, the more is their bliss, and thus these three parties communes with the other.

St. Simon said, *I believe forgiveness of sins*. Here we should believe that they who amend their life, doing penance,* with leaving off sin and keeping God's commandments, and ending in love, shall have forgiveness of all their sins. And Christ, through his passion and death, got for us of his Father forgiveness of our sins.

St. Jude said, *I believe the rising of the body*. Here we should believe that all mankind shall rise at the last doom, from death to life, in body and soul together, of his own kind, and in his own body, incorruptible and immortal. And though the body were burned with fire, or the powder thereof thrown into the four seas that go about the world, yet the soul and it shall come together again, and rise from death to life, at the dreadful doom, and that day forward never after depart. And they that evil lived, and ended in deadly sin, shall go in body and soul to pain for evermore, and they that have lived well and kept the commands of God, and fulfilled the duties of mercy after their power, and ended in charity to God and man, shall go, body and soul together, to bliss for ever.

Of which bliss and life St. Matthias spake in the second article, where he saith, *And I believe in everlasting life*. In that everlasting life of joy and bliss, good men and women that ended well, shall dwell in body and soul without end.

THAT LIFE MAY HE TO US GRANT WHO BOUGHT US

ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE PROLOGUE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A MAN asked Christ what he should do for to life that shall last for ever, and Christ said to him wilt enter into everlasting life, keep the commands. By this answer of Christ, each man may understand there is no other way to heaven, without keeping the commands, and therefore each man and woman will speedily to come to that life, which shall last for ever, do his business with all strength of body and soul, these commandments, and despise all sophistries and arguments of false flatterers and heretics, who both in word despise these commandments, and with false arguments reply against simple men, saying that it is lawful to be busy about the keeping of them; saying that it is needful sometimes to break them, as Jannes and Jambres, the philosophers of Pharaoh stood Moses, through their witchcraft, when he was to deliver God's people out of the thralldom of Pharaoh. These men, confused in understanding, withstand the truth, through which God's people should be delivered from the thralldom of the devil. But all their sophistries will not serve them at the last; if they be not found to do so, and in full will keep, these commandments of God, without other ceremonies, without keeping these commandments, nothing worth, as St. Paul witnesses.†

Almighty God wrote ten commands in two tables, in token that the hearts of his people were full ha

* The doctrines sanctioned by the church of Rome went

On the Commandments.

him, and gave them to Moses, his servant, to teach to his people. And he promised that those who would be obedient and keep them, should have his blessing, prosperity, and wealth, and they that would not, should have his curse, and great sorrow, and mischief, as it is expressed in the fifth book of holy writ.

Three, [four] commandments were written in the first table, and seven [six] in the other.* The three [four] first show how men should love God, and the other seven [six] show what man should do to his fellow christian, and what he shall not do. And these commandments are so hard knit together, that he who loves God fully, loves his fellow christians, and whosoever loves not them, he loves not God. For whoso loves not his neighbour whom he may see with his eyes, how may he love God whom he seeth not? John saith.

THE FIRST (AND SECOND) COMMANDMENT

The first command, God commandeth in these words saying, "I am thy Lord God, that led thee out of Egypt out of the house of thralldom, and bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee a graven image, neither any likeness which is in heaven above, and which is in earth beneath, nor of those things that are in waters under the earth. Thou shalt not put them, nor worship them in soul. I am thy Lord God, a strong jealous lover; visiting the wickedness of fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of those that hated me; and doing mercy unto a thousand of those that love me, and keep my commandments."

Our Lord God said all these words, and they are charged with more wisdom than we can tell. As for the first command we shall understand that almighty God chose the children of Israel, who came of Isaac, Abraham's son, and of

And God suffered his people, for their sins, to be in thralldom in the land of Egypt under king Pharaoh. And they cried to God oft, to bring them out of that land; and so he did at the last, for he had compassion on them, and sent his servant Moses, and Aaron his brother, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he should deliver them out of his people, and he would not. But Moses, by teaching and by signs wrought such wonders before Pharaoh, that at the last he saw the might of God, he delivered God's people. And he led them over the Red Sea, as a dry way, the waters being upright on either side of them, in manner of towers, and they went over dry. And soon after, Pharaoh in envy, gathered together his host, and pursued after the people into the Red Sea. And when they were almost overcome, and all his host, by the same way that the people were made the water to pass forth in its usual course, were drowned* Pharaoh and all his host; and God brought his people over, safe, into the desert. And for this work, and many more, they were commanded to love him for their God, and no other.

And as God brought this people out of bodily thralldom and the bondage of Pharaoh, so he brought us out of spiritual thralldom, and bondage of the fiend. At the time that Christ became man, all mankind was actually in Egypt, that is in the darkness of sin, in the thralldom of Pharaoh, that is, under the power of the fiend. But Christ came down from heaven as a man, and did many wonders and marvels in this world, before the Pharaoh, that is, the fiend, in this Egypt. And through his bloody passion† he delivered his people out of thralldom, and drowned the fiend with his host. For Christ, through his painful passion, overcame the power of the fiend, and left him bound in chains a thousand years after, as St. John saith in the book of Revelation.† And thus God, through his great

On the Commandments.

mercy. For there was no creature that could deliver out of the thralldom of the fiend, but only He that had perfectly double nature in himself, and was both God and man, and would make himself as much after the will of man as Adam by pride did against the will of God.

Furthermore, in this commandment God commandeth his people to have no strange gods. Here God commandeth that all men's belief, trust, and love, be set only in him, and in no other thing against his will. And here he forbiddeth all belief and trust in all manner of witchcraft, dreams, charms, and conjurations. For those that put their belief or trust in any such, withdraw some of their belief and trust from God, and so break his command, and worship themselves false gods. And also men break this commandment in other manners; for look, whatever thou lovest, and fastest goest about to get it, and art most loth to lose it, thou showest by thy will and by thy deeds, that this thing is thy god. Therefore each man look in his own conscience upon what he most sets his liking and thought, and what he is most busy about to please, and that thing he loveth most, whatsoever it be; and what thing a man loveth most, that thing he maketh his god.

Thus each man wilfully using deadly sin, makes himself a false god, by turning away his love from God, to the love of the sin that he useth. And thus when man or woman forsakes meekness, the meekness that Jesus Christ commandeth, and gives himself to highness and pride, he maketh the fiend his god; for he is king over all proud folk, as is written in the book of Job. And so the envious man and woman have revenge and vengeance for their god. The indolent man hath idleness, sloth, and sleep, for his god. The covetous man and woman make worldly gain their god; for covetousness is the root of all evils, and is as a vice to idols as to false gods, as St. Paul saith. Gluttons and drunken folk make their belly their god.

of almighty God, at the dreadful doom, as God saith by his prophets.

Furthermore, in this commandment God forbade to make any graven image or other similitude, with trust on them, or to do worship to them. And it was utterly forbidden to the Jews to whom those commandments were given. First, for the unstedfastness of their hearts, for they were so false in their belief, that some of them worshipped things made of God for their gods. Some worshipped the sun, and some the moon, and some the likenesses of creatures for their god. And so they thought that was only due to God, they gave to other things made by God, and to similitudes and likenesses which they had made themselves, against God's will, and that was utterly forbidden to them to make any similitude or likeness, for the great idolatry which they did to the idols found in many places in the old law.

All such similitudes or images should be as kaithers to ignorant folk; and as clerks say in their books what they should do, so ignorant folks, when they lack teaching, learn by images whom they should worship and what they should be living. Each man is forbidden to do God's will by images, but it is good to each man to learn by the images of them to follow saints living.*

[Wickliff then proceeds to show how the sight of the sacrament hanging over the altar, and crucifixes on the wall, ought to induce men to lift up their souls to heaven, and not believing or trusting that the image or likeness should bring any man out of spiritual or bodily mischief, nor help or riches, or take away."] He proceeds thus:

It is written in God's law that they may neither do to any man evil or good; neither give riches nor take away. And though any make a vow to them, and yield it, they should not seek it. They should not deliver any man from death, nor restore a blind man to his sight, thus

On the Commandments.

Moreover, God saith in this commandment that he is a jealous lover. For he willeth that all man's heart, strength, understanding, be occupied in his law, that thou neither understand, nor will, nor think any thing contrary to God. St. Augustine saith. St. Gregory saith, that the proof of love is the giving of work. We love God truly if we keep his commandments, and refrain us from our lusts. He that fleeteth* abroad by unlawful desires, loves not God, but withstands his will. St. Augustine saith, "Love separates holy men from the world, and maketh men of one will to dwell together." He that has not real love is without and no skill, nor belief, nor giving cattle to poor men, nor penance of body profits any thing to him that has not the love of God. The tongue, soul, and life, are inquired of respecting the love of God. The tongue, that it speak not foul, idle, or wicked words, but such as are clean, chaste, and as becometh words. The soul, that it think no unclean, foul, or carnal thoughts, but clean, chaste, and sweet heavenly thoughts. The life, that it work pleasingly to God's worship. The love of God, as St. Gregory saith, is never idle; if it be not in the love of God, as St. Gregory saith, is never idle; if it be not in the love it worketh great things pleasingly to God. Christ commandeth in the gospel, that each man love him with all his heart. This that Christ saith of all the heart, and all the soul, admits not parting with other things. It sheweth how much a man's heart is set on other things, so much the more is departed from God.

God seeketh threefold love of man, of all his heart, soul, and strength, to withdraw man from the three lusts of the world, that is, from the love of possessions, from riches, from the love of highness and vain worship, from fleshly lusts. For in these three was Christ tempted, and therefore to teach man to withstand these, he saith, Thou shalt love thy Lord God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. By what God saith in this commandment, that he loveth us with all his heart,

chastiseth his children as by rod or staff. Therefore by his prophet, If I be thy God, where is my love be thy Lord, where is my dread? For by love each man should serve God. And therefore St. saith, Holy dread of God bringeth men love. understand not that God doeth vengeance, or punish child for the father or mother that hath sinned child shall not bear the wickedness of the father saith by his prophet. But understand that if the sinful and wicked, and if the child follows and sinful living of the father, then God will punish justly, for his own guilt; and this is what God saith in text, that he will punish the children of them him. God punisheth not the children for the father's guilt, but for that the children were like manner, and in like sins hated God.

THE SECOND (THIRD) COMMANDMENT.

In the second commandment, God saith thus to man, "Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord in vain; for God shall not have him without guilt that taketh his name idly, or without a cause."

In two manners man may take God's name in vain both in manner of living, and also in swearing. When man is baptized, and taketh christendom,* the name of Christ put in his soul, who is both God and name above all names; as St. Paul saith, Thou forsakes the devil and his works, that is, sin; and covenant to be Christ's true servant and to keep his commandments. But when man breaks this covenant, and becometh the fiend's servant, doing deadly sin, then he taketh God's name in vain while he serves the fiend, doing as St. Peter saith. And therefore saith St. Augustin, no man deem himself to be a true christian, man

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of his creatures. St. Augustine saith, that to swear by God, or by any saint, is to call them to bear witness of what thou swearest. Bethink thee well; if thou call a poor man to bear witness of every word thou speakest a little time he would have indignation, and say that thou didst scorn him—much more almighty God, who forbids such vain swearing and calling to bear witness. The man should be both true and right needful, if men should call such a Lord as God is, to bear witness thereof, and therefore God forbids this vain swearing by his name, in his commandment, and in many other places in his law. Christ forbids swearing by creatures, in the gospel of Matthew, where he commandeth to swear not, neither by heaven, nor by earth. In that he forbids to swear by heaven, he forbids to swear by the saints that are in heaven, and in that he forbids to swear by earth, he forbids to swear by any creature in earth. And herewith accords St. James, saying, Dear brethren, before all things swear ye not, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath, lest you be under the doom of God. And St. John Chrysostom saith, that it is idolatry, or worshipping of false gods, to swear by a creature. Yea, as he saith, This is sovereign blasphemy, since this swearing, as much as is in the swearer, makes the creature by which he sweareth, to be God; since it is reserved to God only, that men swear by him, with conditions which God rehearses by Jeremiah the prophet, which are—he that shall swear be compelled by doom of God, that he verily know his cause be true—and also needful to help his fellow-christian in his right. Else should every man keep him from swearing. For if any of these conditions fail, there is a premunire.†

And since Almighty God in his law saith, that he will not be unpunished who taketh God's name thus in vain, what punishment suppose we shall they have, who not

The fiend hath found three false excuses for and hath taught them his servants, to withstand their sin. Some say in scorn, as the fiend telleth, Is it not good to have God often in mind? And I may swear, for I swear truth. And some say swear not, no man will believe me. With these excuses men suppose to excuse themselves for vain swearing, but they accuse themselves before they make their sin more grievous. For as to the first, thee, if thy servant did what thou hadst forbidden, even the oftener he did it, the worse thou art pleased, and more yet if he scorned thee, and said from love, to have thee in mind! To the second feigned excuse may be answered thus; A man may swear always when he saith truth, for each man may say truth when he speaks any thing. For God forbiddeth any man to lie, and thus by his false excuse, men swear at every word, if it were lawful to swear when he saith truth. But this is openly false, as he saith in his scriptures. It is written in the book of Ecclesiastes, man who sweareth much shall be full filled with wrath, and vengeance shall not depart from that house where many oaths are used. And to those who say that men will believe them unless they swear, this methinketh me a great excusation; since a false man may swear as well as a true man, and thus should men believe by oaths as well as a true man. For commonly the more a man is, the more oaths he will swear; and commonly he that readiest swear, will gladly forswear and begin to lie. He that dreadeth not to break God's command, is not afraid to be false. But Christ bids not men to believe by oaths, but he fully teaches to believe the deeds if men knew that thou wert true in thy words, they would ask no oath of thee, for it would be to their avail. But since thou art varying and untrue,

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heaven or by earth, or by thine own head, for thou mayest not make a hair thereof either white or black. But thy words be yea, yea, nay, nay, without any oath, for what thou swearest more than thus it is of evil. For all manner of truth standeth either in yea or in nay; and the heart and mouth should accord in speech, and not say one thing and think another; therefore Christ doubleth this yea, and nay, and thus they should be christian men's word, without vain swearing, either by God or his creatures.

THE THIRD (FOURTH) COMMANDMENT.

The third command of God is commanded by him to us: "Have mind that thou hallow the holy day; in six days shalt thou work thine own works; the seventh day is the rest of the Lord God. That day thou shalt do no servile work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy servant, nor thy work-beast, nor the stranger that dwelleth in thine house. For in six days God made heaven and earth, sea, and all things that are within them, and rested the seventh day; and therefore he blessed that day, and made it holy." In the stead of the seventh day, which was hallowed in the Old Testament by God's commandment, christian men, of devotion, hallow the eighth day,* that is, the Sunday wherein Christ rose again from the dead. The Sunday ignorant people call it, in holy writ is called the Lord's day. This was the first day of the world, wherein man was made. On this day, Christ rose again from death to life immortal. On this day, the Holy Ghost came down to the apostles, and gave to them understanding, wisdom, charity, and hardiness to preach God's truth, and therefore.

But since sin is the worst work of bondage, for it makes men bound to the fiend of hell—and he is the worst

saith St. Augustine, If it need us christian men delight and mirth in holy days, let us delight in word, and seek our delights in declaring God's word, and not ordain precious feasts for the belly and not so hallow the holy days, that we follow them whom these feasts are. For a devout follower is more than an idle praiser, or a praiser by mouth. Praising of heart is following of work. For to work by mouth, and not to follow in living, is nothing but falsely to flatter. Truly to this end are holy days ordained, that by them the congregation of christian men may learn to follow the saints of God.

In three manners men break this commandment. First, we see that all things kindly,* after travail God in six days made heaven and earth, and all things within them, and rested on the seventh day. And all the martyrs, and other saints, travailed on this world for standing sin, and suffered much for God's love and truth, and now they rest in heaven. But many men and women of this world, travail busily all the week, and they will not rest on the Sunday. If there be a market; or any other place where they may win money, then they, and their servant, and their work-beasts, will busily labour therefore. And it seems that all such folk have lost their spiritual mind, and are like to none but the devils that are in hell; for they never rest, but evermore travail in pain, and shall do so, world without end, as the prophet saith. Would God that all such folk would have a man was stoned to death by the commandment, because he gathered sticks on the holy day, as it is written in a book of God's law, and did no greater trespass. And these folk gather many brands of covetousness, and many other sins, to burn their souls in pain, unless they amend their death.

In the second manner men break this

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frequent taverns. For such folk in a manner hallow work days, doing good and lawful works, and in the holy spend their life in drunkenness and gluttony, lechery, pride, and such great deadly sins. In the work day are busy to travail for livelihood for their body, but in holy day they give their souls to the fiend, for lustliking of divers sins. To such folk God speaketh by prophet, saying that he will throw in their faces the fruit of their sins, which they do in the holy day. And in another place he saith, that he hateth their solemnities, that is the sins that are done in them. And it is written in book of mourning (Lamentations) that our enemies, the fiends, have seen our occupations, and they have scorned our holy days.

In the third manner this command is broken by them that spend their time in idle and vain plays, and have no liking to behold and see vanities, and to hear and to tell tales, and to speak of filth and of sin, and to backbite fellow christians when they sit together. And thereby they destroy the virtue and grace that should be in their souls, as St. Bernard saith. For as good speech and good words increase virtue and grace in the souls of speakers and hearers, so foul words of lechery and of other sins foul the souls, both of them that speak, and of them that hear if they consent thereto, as St. Paul saith.

Therefore, whosoever will hallow his holy day to God's worship, learn he another lesson, and understand how he commandeth in his commandment to have regard to his holy day. For man should on the holy day put out of his heart all worldly thoughts, and occupy his mind in heavenly desires, and think on the great goodness and mercy that God hath done for him, how He made him of nought like to himself in soul. What greater token of love may he show, than to make the servant like to the Lord? We have mind that when thou wert a child of wrath, thou

taking vengeance, where he might justly, for one put thee in pain for ever, and do thee no wrong.

Also have mind how he of his goodness, governeth thee in thy right senses, and keepeth thee by night where he suffereth others for their sin to fall into chief both of body and soul. And from all such by his mercy he hath kept thee. Think also how thou hast been against him, and all these great wrongs which he hath willingly done to thee; and how thou art an unkind wretch, against all these mercies, more, hast given him gall to drink, of bitter answers, and often wittingly and wilfully hast broken his commands, both in thought, word, and deed.

That thou shouldest have mind of all these good things many more which he hath done to thee, and of thy many trespasses which thou hast done against him — and having of such mind, demands to have rest of soul, and such rest should be had on the Sunday, therefore God commandeth each man to have rest on his lowly holy day. For each man's mind or thought should be kept from vanities, and occupied thereabout, as God called the holy day, the day of rest. For each man should be busy to purchase rest of soul and body, and avoid all things for the time that hinder this. The Sunday on the Sunday betokens the resting in bliss after death, and they that will not keep rest of soul this day, in sin, it is to be dreaded, that unless they amend, they shall not have the rest of bliss to come.

In these three (four) first commands, each man is taught how he shall love God; and in the seven (six) last is taught how he shall love his fellow christians, and what he shall do to them, and what he shall leave

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if thou shouldest not worship them that brought thee to this world, and loved and helped thee, when thou mightest not, neither couldst help thyself. And St. Augustine saith it is a brutish condition for a child to forget to worship and to love his father and his mother.

Three manner of fathers we should worship. The first is the Father who createth from nothing; the second is that is our father by nature; the third is the father by adoption, and especially by virtues. The principal father that we should worship is Almighty God, who made us, body and soul, and nourisheth the body with food that cometh of the earth, and comforteth every good soul with heavenly doctrine. This Father defendeth every soul that is true to him, from the power of the fiend, who would overset it, and granteth it through his grace, to be an heir in heaven. And no man may do, but only God almighty; for he is Father of all, most rightful and mighty, whom no man may withstand. And therefore, we should worship him over all other, for he is our Father, our Lord, and our God, and he shall be our Judge at the last day, and for the endless reward that he keepeth for us if we keep his commands. Whoso loves his father or mother, or any other creature more than Him, he is not worthy to have him, as he loveth himself. And St. Augustine saith, that as there may be no moment or time, in which man uses not God's goodness and his mercy, so ought there to be no moment or time, in which man hath him not in mind, for to worship him.

The second father that we should worship, is he that is our father by nature. To him we should be subject, obedient, meek, and serviceable, as Christ teacheth by his own doctrine. For he was subject and serviceable to his mother and to Joseph. And since he is and was very God, and would be subject and serviceable to an earthly creature, how shall mortal wretches escape from the wrath of him, if we be

they should live justly, to please God almighty, and to bring them out of old customs of sin and unreasonable. For he that is negligent in this, does great wrong to his father and mother, if he may, by any easy means, to avoid such defaults.

And look that no child consent to sin for the sake of worship* of father or mother; for bowing to man is no obedience, but the greatest rebellion that may be made against God, or any christian man. For man may consent to sin to win all the world. Christ asked not profiteth a man to win all the world and suffer for his own soul?

The third fathers we should worship are men of wisdom and especially of virtue. For many old men there are who are full of vices, and so they are not to be in understanding, although they are of great age. Therefore worship thou in all such that which is of the soul, which is body and soul, but beware that thou commit no sin; for it is a foul abuse, as St. Augustine saith, for a man or woman of great age to be without good living.

THE FIFTH (SIXTH) COMMANDMENT

In the fifth command, God forbids all wrongdoing, both of body and soul. For this is one of the first that ever cry for vengeance before Almighty God. For before God said to Cain, Lo the voice of thy brother crieth unto me from the earth. This sin of man is so grievous in God's sight, that he commanded in the old testament, before Christ's coming, that if any man in wait, or any treachery, killed a man, and afterwards came to God's altar for succour, yet should he be taken thence, and be slain for that deed. And therefore God saith, He that slayeth shall be slain. For the

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man beware of malicious bodily manslaying, that no man deed, nor by will, nor by procuring others, for hate or dread, assent to this sin. For God will take great vengeance on him, who for his own malicious will slayeth man, or procureth thereto against God's law, unless amend him* before he die.

Of spiritual manslaying there are many manners. The first is manslaying of heart. For each man that hates fellow christian in his heart is a manslayer, as St. J. saith. The second is, when man wilfully assenting to wicked thoughts of his heart, turneth from goodness. The third manner is, by unlawful lusts and desires engendered in heart, which will slay him that is slow to put them away. As it is written, Desires slay the slothful.

Also there is a spiritual manslaughter by mouth; that is in three manners. The first is in lying, for the mouth that lieth slayeth the soul. The second is of backbiting, for that is the tongue of the adder, which stingeth to stillness, as is written in a book of God's law. The backbiter slayeth first himself through his own wickedness, by the malice of his heart; and also him that heareth consenteth to his false telling, and after, peradventure makes it worse. Also he slayeth him whom he backbiteth as much as he is able, for he makes him lose his good praise and fame. And also when this comes to his ear who is spoken of, then he is out of charity, and thus the backbiter slayeth three at once. The third manner of manslaughter by mouth, is false flattering, or praising in malice and wickedness, or for a man to show glossing† word to another whom he hateth in his heart. Those that flatter men in sin by any false colouring, hide other men's spiritual death in their own error, not telling them their perils, nor reproving their defaults, either for dread or for covetous

devil hath been a manslayer from the beginning he slew himself with sin, and all the angels that c him. Also he slew Adam and Eve through b ticing ; and so he doth those whom he may ove deadly sin. Therefore it is written, Flee thou : wouldest flee from the biting of an adder ; for it as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men.

Also there is manslaughter in other manner man is said to slay his fellow christian ; as he hath the goods of the world, and seeth man or great default or mischief, and will not help them not of pardoners, nor of bold beggars,* but of the poor, feeble, crooked, blind, and lame, or in some chief, by the sufferance of God ; and others who and default, who are ashamed to ask, and w suffer much mischief than beg. Of whom it holy writ, Thou hast seen a man dying for l thou hast not fed him thou hast slain him.

* Sellers of the pope's pardons or indulgences, and b Chaucer thus describes one of the latter. After preac gatory, and urging his hearers to pay for their friends' d

When folk in church had gave him what they list

He went his way, no longer would he rest.

With scrip and tipped staff, y tucked high,

In every house he gan to pore and pry,

And begged meal and cheese, or else corn.

His fellow had a staff tipped with horn,

A pair of tables all of ivory,

A pointell y polished fetously,||

And wrote always the names as he stood

Of all folks that gave them any good,

Askaunce that he would for them pray,

“ Give us a bushel wheat, malt, or rye,

A God's kichell,‡ or a trippe of cheese,

Or else what ye list, I may not choose,

A God's halfpenny, or a mass penny,

Or give us of your brawn, if ye have any,

A dagon§ of your blanket, dear dame,

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Also, if any man by fraud, or by sleight, or by any false tricks, as by weight or measure; or by deceit in a fer,* or by withholding of labourer's hire, gets other man's goods to make himself rich, he is said to be a manslayer. Therefore, let all those beware that take any thing wrong, or by false pretence, supposing to be free because they give to another under the colour of alms, but receive none. For all alms must be given of true gotten goods and to those that Christ limiteth.†

Of such folk as by rapine and deceit slay their fellow christians, taking from them their livelihood, and so shorten their life, God speaketh by his prophets, saying, Your hands are fouled with blood, your fingers are full of wickedness. And he that wieldeth by violence, by theft, or by fraud and deceit, that whereby poor men ought to be sustained, his hands defouled with blood of poor, and he that eats and drinks of such possessions, and clothes himself, and builds houses, and walls of such possessions, eats and drinks the blood of poor men, is clothed in the blood of poor men and lays the foundation of his buildings in the blood of poor men. Let such men hear the word of God, Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, his blood shall be shed.

Also there is a manslaying by giving evil example. And there is manslaughter of negligence or carelessness, which God speaketh by his prophet, to each curate or priest, If thou speakest not to the people, that a wicked man keep him from his evil way, he shall die in his wickedness, I shall seek his blood at thy hand.

THE SIXTH (SEVENTH) COMMANDMENT.

The sixth command of God forbids all manner of murder, both bodily and spiritual. For of all sins the

the foulest For why? Other sins defile only but this defiles both body and soul, as St. Paul among all other sins, this most pleases the fiend. sins, commonly he getteth only one at once, but the least he getteth two. For the sin of lechery taken great vengeance, as is shown in holy writ history of Dinah, and of the daughters of Moab.

To this deed the devil tempteth in five maner. St. Gregory saith. The first by foolish looking, and by unhonest words, and after that by foul touching, kissing, and so cometh to the deed. Thus craft bringeth from one to another. Therefore I have made covenant with mine eyes that I shall not look upon a maid. And women that array themselves to be seen of fools, sin grievously, for by their dress and countenance they cause the loss of many souls. It is a foul abuse to see a woman without chastity or good manners belong to the keeping of chastity—toward array be not to show, but to conceal and to say that the desire of the heart be set to God and to good things, destroying foul thoughts of the heart and making them vain.

It behoveth to flee occasion thereof, as company, place, and delicate and lustful meats and drinks, and thereto. And therefore saith a great clerk, that a man must especially be God's coward,* and flee occasion that moves to this sin, and trust not in his own understanding, or to wisdom. For what man was more able than Samson? Who was more able than David? Who was wiser than Solomon? And yet those were burned with the fire of lechery. Therefore let him be God's clean child, as God's coward, flee all occasions and companies that move him to this sin.

The second medicine that helps against the

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to deadly sin, and leaveth the love of Christ, he sin
spiritual lechery with the fiend.

THE SEVENTH (EIGHTH) COMMANDMENT.

The seventh command, God saith in these w
“Thou shalt not do theft.” Theft, as a learned
saith, is a taking away of goods without the leave
will of him that owns them. In this command,
forbids all manner of wrong taking and withholdin
any man’s goods—all privy stealing, robbing, and
guiling—all sleights and deceits in buying and sel
Therefore let each man beware, that he do no theft
God do vengeance on him, as he did on Achan. And
have any thing of other men wrongfully, by theft, sub
or deceit, let him restore and make restitution or sat
tion therefore, by all his power, else the sin is not forg
as St. Augustine saith.

Since theft is taking of other men’s goods agains
will of them that own them, it seems hereby that all w
getting of goods, by usury, by rapine, by false weights
measures, and secret guile, is theft done by covetous
to have other men’s goods against God’s will, and
that own them. Therefore, saith St. Paul, to mak
beware, whoever desires thus to be rich, fall into ten
tion and snare of the devil, and into many grievous
unprofitable desires, which drown men in death and
nation. For covetousness is the root of all evils. A
another place he saith, Let no man beguile his brothe
chaffering by any deceit, for God takes vengeance
them that so do. Therefore, those that are great of p
in this world, let them not rob nor beguile those tha
smaller, neither by rapine, nor by extortion, nor by
claims; but let them be satisfied with the wages tha

or liar, in selling or in buying. For it is writ in the Holy Ghost's teaching, that whoso gathereth up a lying tongue, he is vain and evil. And a man that sweareth and forsweareth himself in buying or in any other manner, Zechariah. the prophet of God saith thus: He saith that he saw a book flying in the air, that was twenty cubits long and ten in breadth. And he said to him, It is the curse of God, that goeth out against the houses, and to all men's houses that forswear by the name of God. And God speaketh by his prophets against those who with evil gotten goods, buy lands, rents, and make great buildings, bitterly cursing their falseness. Wo be to you, saith he, who bid a house, and field to field, and say right is wrong, and wrong is right—and so say all men who by any false means gather goods together. Therefore, saith God by another prophet, Wo be to them that multiply things that are false in their own.

And let him that is a labourer, or a craftsman, or his craft or his labour truly, without sleight or other guile, St. Paul exhorts by the teaching of God. And he saith, who with wrong, withhold the workman's hire. It is one of the four sins that ever cry vengeance before God, St. James saith. Also, in this command, God forbiddeth the cursed sin of usury, in which men sin after diverse

THE EIGHTH (NINTH) COMMANDMENT

In the eighth command, God forbiddeth every man to bear any false witness against his christian. For through false witness many a man loses his heritage, and many a guiltless man is put to death. Thus Christ who was most innocent, was condemned to death by means of

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devil a liar, and the father of lies. For he found the leasing, and made it himself, when he said to Eve in disguise, that she should not die, though she ate of the fruit of the tree God had forbidden upon pain of death, but Adam and she should be as gods, knowing good and evil. But this was a leasing, and that Adam and Eve knew after eating the fruit. And therefore the devil is said the father of all false witness bearers and liars, and they are said to be his children, by following in manners and in living. Therefore Christ said to the Jews, that they were of their father the devil, for they wrought his deeds. Therefore, let each man beware, for it is written, They that lie are abominable to the Lord.

Therefore let each man beware that neither for dread, nor for hate, nor for gift, he use leasing; neither bear any witness against his fellow christian. For Judas sold truth when he sold Christ for money. And they who for gain or reward, bear false witness and deny truth, do the same spiritually that Judas did bodily. For while they are coveting any thing, deny truth, they sell Christ that is truth. Therefore let each man keep himself from leasing, and let those by his might that he hath power over. For a doctor saith, that though a man might by a private leasing save all this world, which else should perish, yet should not lie to save it.

Leasing stands not only in false words, but also in feigning works, and in manner of living. And therefore let each man and woman who is called a christian, look that their living accord with the lore and teaching of Christ. Let him that is called a priest of Christ, know and teach the living and word, the law of his Lord; lest he be of the same sort that St. Paul speaks of, who acknowledge by mouth and by word that they know God, but in their works and living they deny the knowing of him. Of which manner of

work things contrary to those orders. Therefore man, in his degree, be busy to seek the truth teaching, to live thereafter, and so to flee sin.

THE NINTH (TENTH, FIRST PART) COMMANDMENT

The ninth command is this, "Thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's house," and in another place God said, "Thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's field." Here God forbids all wrongful desire and coveting of other men's goods, of house and land, gold and silver, clothes, and other things that cannot move themselves from one place to another. And as in the seventh command God forbids the deed of wrongfully taking any man's goods, so in the ninth command he forbids all manner of wrongful desire, whether in deed or in heart to any man's goods. This commandment is the ground of all evil—having such manner of good in man wrongfully hath any such goods unless the man's heart in his having be false coveting in heart. And the root of all weed is well cleansed out of land when the root is pulled away, so these four commandments are well kept when the coveting of the heart is fully quenched.

Of the great harm that cometh of false coveting in heart, a great clerk speaks, saying, Oh how many men have been deceived and destroyed! Achan, Gehazi, Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, and the Holy writ also speaks of the mischief that cometh of covetousness, and wrong desire of man's heart, as the example of Ahab who coveted the vineyard of Naboth, and Jezebel the queen, upon whom sentence was fulfilled as God had said. And therefore let each man and woman beware that false desire or covetousness to have any thing by wrong, or against his will, reign not in the heart, lest worse befall them than befell king Ahab and

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will in all things, for oftentimes it befalls, that sin is grounded in evil will than in deed. And as God in the sixth command forbids the sin of lechery, so he forbids this command, the will and consent of the heart. For the deed is deadly sin, so is the full consent and the consent of the heart deadly sin, as Christ saith himself.

Therefore, let each man and woman bethink busily when any thought enters into their heart, and if any thought is to draw the reason of their soul to consent to any sin, let him not muse on that thought, but without delay suppress it and put it away, moving his heart to think upon the bitter death that Christ suffered, and upon the endless joys of heaven which he loses if he consent to that sin; and upon the bitter and endless pains of hell that he shall have as his end, if he die in that desire or sin which this wicked thought will bring him to, if it abide in the heart till the reason of the soul consent.

And also let each woman beware, that neither by countenance, nor by array of body, nor of head, she stir any man to covet her to sin. Not crooking* her hair, neither laying it up on high, nor the head arrayed about with gold and precious stones, not seeking curious clothing, nor of nice shew showing herself to be seemly to fools. For all such things of women, St. Peter and St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost teaching, openly forbid. But let them be in clothing of shamefacedness and soberness; being subject to their husbands, after the rule of reason, as St. Peter and St. Paul teach; that they who believe not God's word be won to health, beholding in awe the holy and chaste conversation of women. Thus in old time good women and holy women believing in God, adorned themselves, as St. Peter saith.

CONCLUSION.

These are the ten commands of God, after which i

And in another place, Deut. vi. God saith, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, which I command to thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy sons, and thou shalt dwell with them, sitting in thine house, and going in the way, and lying down, and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be betwixt thine eyes, and thou shalt write them on the lintels and door-posts of thy house. And when thou art in thy house, or when thou art going out, or when thou art lying down, or when thou art rising, thou shalt rule all thy thoughts, words, and deeds, and open, within thy house and without, by the commandments of God. Keep thyself and thy soul care, and forget thou the words which thine eyes have seen, and let them not fall from thine heart, in all the days of thy life. Thou shalt teach them to thy sons and to those that are strangers to thee. And St. Augustine saith to all Christians, Govern ye your houses, govern ye your sons, govern ye your household attendants. As it pertains to us in the church, so it pertains to you to do in your houses, that ye yield good reason to God, of them that ye do to you. St. Paul saith, He that hath not care of his own household, and most of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than a heathen man. Therefore let us first learn and do in deed himself, and after that we may move others to keep these commandments.*

[Wickliff then exhorts men, not “to be negligent, for dread of the sentence that God saith in his law,” and quotes at length Deuteronomy xxviii., and adds that men and women may have grace truly to keep the commandments of God, and therethrough flee these curses, and have these blessings; and ever to be above in grace, never under in sin, and after that, to reign above in everlasting bliss, grant, Jesus Christ, that bought man with his heart’s blood, merciful God. Amen.

All these ten commands of God are contained in two words of love—that is, To love God above all

On the Commandments.

commands; for he reverences his elders and all his christians. And he will not slay his fellow christian in any manner, nor commit lechery, and he will not be a thief to rob his fellow christian, by any deceit or taking his goods against his will. And he that loveth his fellow christian as himself, will not bear any false witness, and will not covet his neighbour's house, nor land, nor wife, nor servant, nor any other goods that he owns. Thus the Ten Commandments of God are kept in these two words of love. Therefore saith St. Paul, Whoso loveth, fulfilleth all the law. Whoso loveth God over all things, is ever desirous not to offend him in thought, word, or deed. And to love his fellow christian, is neither to covet, nor to suffer, nor to counsel or procure, nor to consent to any thing to be done to him other than thou shouldest desire were done to thee, if thou wert in his state. And therefore saith Christ himself confirming this sentence, All things that ye desire men should do to you, do ye the same to them.

[Wickliff enforces these considerations at considerable length by quotations from the scripture and the fathers' proceeds,]

Whoso loveth God over all other things, and his fellow christian as himself, will not be proud. For pride is either unskilful highness, through which a man is disobedient to God and his commands, or it is an unreasonable highness through which a man exalts himself above his fellow christians, and despises them. Also, he that hath this love leaveth covetousness. For he that loveth God above all other things, and his fellow christian as he should, will desire nothing that is against the will of God, or harmful to his fellow christian.

And he that hath this love will not live in sloth, but will endeavour with all his might to serve his God in fulfilling his commands. And after the manner that he should